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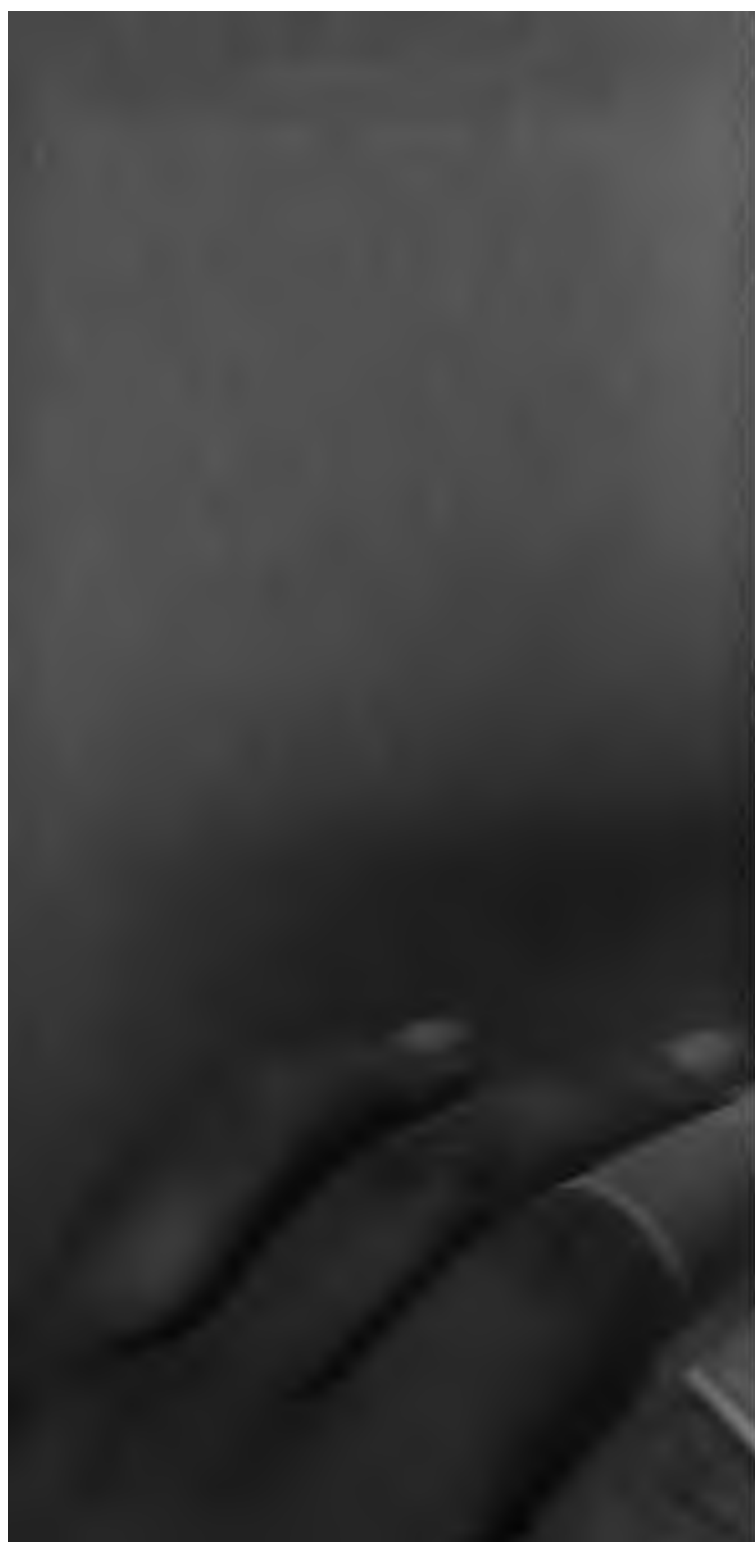
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T. Thurston.









THE
ADVANTAGE AND NECESSITY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN REVELATION

SHOWN FROM THE
State of Religion
IN THE
ANCIENT HEATHEN WORLD;

ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO
THE KNOWLEDGE AND WORSHIP OF THE ONE TRUE GOD;
A RULE OF MORAL DUTY:

AND
A STATE OF FUTURE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
A Preliminary Discourse on Natural and Revealed Religion.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By JOHN LELAND, D. D.
AUTHOR OF THE VIEW OF THE DEISTICAL WRITERS, &c.

THE THIRD EDITION.

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VOL. I.  
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To the King.

Most Gracious Sovereign !

THE following Treatise, which is designed to show the advantages we enjoy by the gospel revelation, is with great humility addressed to your Sacred Majesty. To this the author was encouraged by the favourable notice your Majesty, when Prince of Wales, was pleased to take of a book he formerly published with an intention to serve the Christian cause, and which you so far honoured with your princely approbation, as to send a considerable number of them to America, at your own expence. So early a proof of your Majesty's zeal for Christianity afforded pleasing prospects, that when you should ascend the throne of your ancestors, you would make religion the object of your royal care, and both patronize it by your authority, and adorn it by your example.

The Divine Providence has now placed your Majesty at the head of one of the most powerful and flourishing nations in the world, and put it in your power to give illustrious proofs of your concern for the honour of God, and your regard to the happiness of mankind, by promoting the valuable interests of piety, virtue, and useful learning; which is the most likely way to draw down a blessing from heaven upon your Majesty's person and government, and to advance and secure the true glory and prosperity of your people.

When a king who has no earthly superior, preserves a just sense of his own subjection to the King of kings, and whilst he receives the homage of his subjects who are his fellow-creatures, is himself careful with an unfeigned devotion to pay his duty to the great Creator and Lord of all, to whom he must be accountable for his conduct; when he

maintains a purity and regularity of manners amidst the most specious allurements of a tempting world; this forms a character which derives a glory to the greatest monarch, far superior to all the splendours of royal magnificence.

It is a thing which cannot reasonably be denied, that religion, rightly understood and practised, strengthens the sacred ties between sovereigns and their subjects. It tends to render kings just and equal in their administrations, the fathers of their people, and the guardians of their liberties; and to render the people loyal and obedient, ready with the greatest fidelity and cheerfulness to yield all due subjection and allegiance; and at the same time it has a manifest tendency to spread good order and harmony, and to promote the practice of those virtues which have the greatest influence on public as well as private happiness.

That this may be the blessing of your Majesty, and these nations—that wisdom and righteousness may be the stability of your throne, and that your Majesty may long reign in the hearts of a happy and united people—that the knowledge and practice of true vital Christianity may flourish under your auspicious government—and that these nations may continue in the possession and due improvement of their civil and religious privileges, under Princes of your Majesty's illustrious line to the latest generations; is the ardent prayer of all your Majesty's faithful subjects, and, in a particular manner, of,

May it please your Majesty,

Your Majesty's most dutiful, most obedient,
and most devoted Subject and Servant,

JOHN LELAND.

PREFACE.

As I am fully persuaded that the Christian Revelation, considering the excellency of its doctrines, the purity of its precepts, and the power of those motives whereby the practice of them is enforced, and especially its exceeding great and precious promises, and the glorious and sublime hopes which good men are thereby raised unto, is one of the choicest gifts of heaven to mankind, so I think no man can be better employed than in endeavouring to display its advantages to the world, and defend it against the opposition of gainsayers. This is what I have honestly intended in several books formerly published on that subject;* and which, I trust, have not been altogether without their use. It was however neither my intention nor inclination, considering my years and growing infirmities, to engage any farther in this kind of service. But some persons,† to whose judgment and authority I owe great deference, urged me sometime ago to review the books I had written, and out of them to form a treatise in which the arguments in favour of Revelation might be digested into a regular series, and considered both separately and in their joint connection and harmony, together with a refutation of the principal objections. And that to make this the easier I might freely make use of my own sentiments and expressions formerly published, and transcribe them into this new work. Some progress was made in this design, but after a while it was laid aside. For I could not satisfy myself to put a work upon the public,

* Against Morgan, Tindal, Christianity not founded on Argument, &c. &c.

† Late Lord Bishop of London Dr. Sherlock; Dr. Wilson, Prebendary of Westminster; and others.

which should be little more than an extract or abridgment of what I had before published, though in another form. As this however occasioned my turning my thoughts again to the controversy between the Christians and Deists, it gave rise to the following treatise. I found, upon considering this subject, that the ablest of those who have attempted to maintain the deistical cause in a way of reason and argument (for I do not speak of those who have contented themselves with some ill-placed jest and ridicule, and with repeating stale and trifling objections which have been frequently answered and exposed) have placed their chief strength in asserting the absolute sufficiency of natural reason, left merely to its own force, without any higher assistance, to answer all the purposes of religion and happiness. They maintain that even the bulk of mankind need no other or better guide; and particularly, that the common reason implanted in all men does of itself make the clearest discoveries of the unity, perfections, and attributes of God, of his providence and government of the world, of the whole of moral duty in its just extent, and of a future state of retributions: that these which are the main articles in which all religion principally consists, are naturally known to all mankind; so that an extraordinary Revelation from God is perfectly needless; and therefore we may justly conclude, that no such Revelation was ever given, since, in that case, it could answer no valuable end at all. This indeed would not follow. For if we should allow that those main articles of what is usually called Natural Religion, are what all men are able clearly to discern of themselves, by their own natural light, without instruction, yet since all that make proper reflections upon their own state must be conscious that they have in many instances transgressed the law of God, and thereby exposed themselves to his just displeasure, they might still stand in great need of a Divine Revelation, to instruct them upon what terms he is willing to restore his offending creatures to his grace and favour, and how far he will think fit to reward their sincere though imperfect obedience. In this view, a Revelation from God, declaring the methods of his wisdom and love for our recovery, and his gracious purposes towards penitent returning sinners, and publishing the glad tidings of pardon and salvation upon such terms as he seeth fit to appoint and require, would be an advantage we cannot be sufficiently thankful for. But if be-

sides this, it can be made to appear, that mankind stand in great need of Divine Revelation to guide and instruct them aright, even in the main articles of what is usually called Natural Religion, the cause of deism, as far as it can be formed into a consistent system, exclusive of all Revelation, falls to the ground. I am very sensible that they who take upon them the character of Deists, are far from being agreed in those articles of religion, the clearness of which, when arguing against the necessity or usefulness of Divine Revelation, they effect mightily to extol: and that there is too much reason to think, that one of the principal sources of those prejudices many of them have entertained against the Christian Revelation is its setting those principles, and their just and natural consequences, in too clear and strong a light. But since, the better to carry on their attacks against Revealed Religion, they put on an appearance of believing both the necessity and importance of those principles, and their being universally obvious to all mankind, even to them that never had the benefit of Divine Revelation; this led me to make an inquiry into the state of religion in the ancient heathen world, especially in those nations which are accounted to have been the most learned and civilized, and among whom there were many persons that made the highest pretensions to learning and philosophy. This inquiry cost me a laborious search. For though this subject has been treated of by others, and I have endeavoured to profit by their labours, yet I did not think proper to rely entirely upon them, but, as far as I was able, examined every thing myself; and where, in a few instances, I had not an opportunity of consulting the originals, but depended upon the quotations made by others, I have referred the reader to the authors from whom I took them.

The result of my inquiries is contained in the following work; in which I first propose to represent the state of religion in the Gentile world, with respect to that which lies at the foundation of all religion, the knowledge and worship of the one true God, in opposition to idolatry and polytheism. 2dly, To consider what notions they had of moral duty, taken in its just extent: a thing of the highest importance to mankind. 3dly, To take a view of the notions which obtained among them of a future state of rewards and punishments; which is also a point of vast consequence to the cause of religion and virtue in the world. Under these

several heads I do not pretend to argue from speculative hypotheses concerning the supposed powers of human nature; or to affirm that it is not possible for any man, by the mere force of his own reason, to attain to any rational persuasion of these things; but I proceed upon fact and experience, which will help us to form the truest judgment in this matter, and will show us what we are to expect from human reason, if left merely to its own unassisted force, in the present state of mankind. The enquiry is carried on to the time of our Saviour's coming, and the issue of my researches, as far as my own particular judgment and persuasion is concerned, has been to produce in me a full conviction of the great need mankind stood in of an extraordinary Divine Revelation, even with regard to those that are accounted the clearest as well as the most important articles of what is usually called Natural Religion; and to inspire me with the highest thankfulness to God for the Gospel Revelation, which has set these things in the most glorious light. This is what I have endeavoured to show; and if what I shall offer on those heads can be any way instrumental to excite the same sentiments and affections in others, and to heighten their esteem for the Christian Revelation as contained in the Holy Scriptures, and to make them more careful to improve it to the excellent purposes for which it was manifestly designed, I shall not grudge the pains I have taken, but shall count myself happier than any worldly advantages could make me.

This work has grown upon my hands much beyond my original intention. But when I was once engaged upon this subject, I was not willing to treat it in a slight and superficial manner; and yet several things are laid aside which I had prepared, and which would have enlarged it still more. The materials of the first part were alone sufficient to fill a large volume; and therefore I designed to publish it separately. But some judicious friends were of opinion, that it would be better to lay the whole before the public in one view. This I have ventured to do, voluminous as it is, and hope the importance of the subject, as well as the great extent of it, will be admitted as an apology. To the whole is fixed a Preliminary Discourse on Natural and Revealed Religion, which I believe will not be thought an improper Introduction to a work of this nature.

¹ In treating of the subject proposed, I have sometimes found myself obliged to differ from persons, for whose learning and judgment I have a great regard. And though I am not conscious to myself of having made any wilful misrepresentations of things, yet it is very probable that, in the course of so long a work, I have committed mistakes, which will need the indulgence of the reader.

As a book of this kind must unavoidably contain a great number of quotations, I have not thought it necessary in every instance to give the words in the original language, though I have frequently done so; but have, to the best of my ability, always given a faithful account of their sense. Great care has been taken to make the references to the quotations particular and exact, that any man who pleases may the more easily have it in his power to examine and compare them.

After I had brought the following work near to a conclusion, I met with a book written by the late learned Dr. Archibald Campbell, Professor of Divinity and Ecclesiastical History in the University of St. Andrews, which I had not seen before, entitled, "The Necessity of Revelation: or, an Enquiry into the extent of Human Powers with respect to Matters of Religion; especially those two fundamental articles, the Being of God, and the Immortality of the Soul." Published in 1739. As the design of this treatise seems in some measure to coincide with what I had in view, I read it over with great care, and must do him the justice to say that he has treated his subject with great learning and diligence. But the method he makes use of is so different from that which I have pursued, that the one does not interfere with the other; nor has it occasioned any alteration in the plan which I had formed. I have, however, in several places, added marginal notes referring to the Doctor's book, either where I thought it contained a fuller illustration of what I have more briefly hinted at, or where, as sometimes has been the case, I happened to differ from that learned writer.

Not to detain the reader any longer, the plan of the following work is briefly this:—

That there was an original revelation communicated to mankind in the earliest ages, for leading them to the knowledge of God and religion, some vestiges of which continued long among

the nations: that, in process of time, through the negligence and corruption of mankind, religion, in its main articles, and particularly in what related to the knowledge and worship of the one true God, became, in a great measure, defaced, and overwhelmed with the grossest superstitions and idolatries: that this was the state of things even in the most polite and civilized nations, and all the aids of learning and philosophy were ineffectual and vain: that therefore there was great need of a new divine revelation from heaven, to set the great principles of religion in the most clear and convincing light, and to enforce them upon mankind by a divine authority, in a manner suited to their vast importance: that accordingly it pleased God to do this by the Christian revelation, which was fitted and designed to be published to all mankind, and was accompanied with all the evidences of a divine original which were proper to procure its reception in the world: that to prepare the way for this, there had been an extraordinary revelation several ages before, which, though immediately promulgated to a particular people, was, in several respects, of use to other nations, for checking the progress of idolatry and polytheism, and preserving the knowledge and worship of the one true God in the world, when it seemed in danger of being extinguished.

From all which it appears, that God never left himself without witness among men: that his dispensations towards mankind have been conducted with great wisdom, righteousness, and goodness: and that we, who have the favour of God, enjoy the benefit of the last and most perfect revelation of the divine will which was ever made to mankind, are under the highest obligations to receive it with the profoundest veneration, with the most unfeigned gratitude and thankful admiration to the Divine Goodness, and to endeavour to make the best use and improvement of it.

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AN

Introductory Discourse

CONCERNING

NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

~~~~~

**RELIGION**, in its true notion, necessarily supposes and includes an intercourse between God and man: *i. e.* on God's part, discoveries and manifestations of himself and his perfections, and of his will with regard to the duties he requireth: and, on man's part, a capacity and readiness to receive and improve those discoveries, and to conform to all the significations of the divine will. For it is an undeniable principle, that whatsoever plainly appeareth to be the mind and will of God, in whatever way we come to know it, we are indispensably obliged to observe. And there are two ways by which God may be supposed to manifest himself and his will to mankind,—by his works and by his word.

Accordingly, religion has been usually distributed into natural and revealed. These are not two essentially different religions, much less contrary or contradictory to one another: for as both are supposed to come from God, who is truth itself, there must be a harmony between them: nor yet are they entirely the same, and only differing in the manner of communication. For though all true revealed religion must be really consistent with, and contain nothing contrary to, the clear light of nature and reason, yet it may discover and

reveal several things relative to truth and duty, which that light, if left to itself, could not have discovered at all, or not with sufficient clearness and certainty. These, therefore, are not to be set in opposition : nor is the one of them designed to exclude the other. And, in fact, God manifested himself in both these ways from the beginning ; so that it may, with the greatest justness and propriety, be said, that he hath never left himself without witness among men. Happy would it have been for them, if they had been careful to make a right use and improvement of those discoveries !

## SECTION I.

### OF NATURAL RELIGION.

THE word natural religion has been taken in various acceptations. Some, by natural religion, understand every thing in religion, with regard to truth and duty, which, when once discovered, may be clearly shown to have a real foundation in the nature and relations of things, and which unprejudiced reason will approve, when fairly proposed and set in a proper light. And, accordingly, very fair and goodly schemes of natural religion have been drawn up by Christian philosophers and divines, in which they have comprehended a considerable part of what is contained in the Scripture revelation: *e. g.* the important truths and principles relating to the existence, the unity, the perfections, and attributes of God, his governing providence and moral administration, the worship that is due to him, the law that is given to mankind, or the whole of moral duty in its just extent, as relating to God, our neighbours, and ourselves, the rewards and punishments of a future state, and other articles nearly connected with these, or dependant upon them. And after having taken great pains to show that all this is perfectly agreeable to sound reason, and founded in the nature of things, they have honoured the

whole with the name of natural religion. It cannot be denied, that it is a real and great service to religion, to show that the main principles and duties of it are what right reason must approve. And no small praise is certainly due to those who have set themselves to demonstrate this with great clearness and force of argument.

But it does not follow, that because these things, when once clearly discovered, may be proved to be agreeable to reason, and to have a real foundation in the nature of things, that therefore reason alone, in the present state of mankind, if left to itself, without higher assistance, would merely, by its own force, have discovered all these things with their genuine consequences, and have applied them to their proper uses, for directing men in the true knowledge and practice of religion. It is a just observation of that great man, Mr. Locke, that "a great many things which we have been bred up in the belief of from our cradles (and are notions grown familiar, and, as it were, natural to us under the gospel) we take for unquestionable truths, and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance of them, had revelation been silent."\* And he had said before, that "every one may observe a great many truths, which he receives at first from others, and readily affirms to be consonant to reason, which he would have found it hard, and perhaps beyond his strength, to have discovered himself. Native and original truth is not so easily wrought out of the mine, as we, who have it ready dug and fashioned to our hands, are apt to imagine."† To the same purpose the learned Dr. Clarke observes, that "it is one thing to see that these rules of life, which are before-hand plainly and particularly laid before us, are perfectly agreeable to reason, and another thing to find out these rules merely by the light of reason,

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\* Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, in his Works, vol. II. p. 535. ed. 3.

† Ibid. p. 532.

“without their having been first any otherwise known.”\* Accordingly, some able and strenuous assertors of natural religion, or the law of nature, though they contend that it is founded in the nature of things, and agreeable to right reason, yet derive the original promulgation of it from divine revelation. Puffendorf observes, that “it is very probable that God taught the first men the chief heads of natural law, which were afterwards preserved and spread among their descendants by means of education and custom: yet this does not hinder, but that the knowledge of these laws may be called natural, inasmuch as the truth and certainty of them may be discovered in a way of reasoning, and in the use of that reason which is natural to all men.” Puffend. de Jure Nat. et Gent. lib. II. c. iii. sect. 20. According to this account, natural religion, or the law of nature, is not so called because it was originally discovered by natural reason, but because, when once made known, it is what the reason of mankind, duly exercised, approves, as founded in truth and nature.

Natural religion, in the sense now explained, is very consistent with the supposition of an extraordinary divine revelation, both to discover and promulgate it at first, and to re-establish and confirm it, when, through the corruption of mankind, the important principles and duties of it were fallen into such darkness and obscurity, and so confounded with pernicious errors and obscure mixtures, that there needed an extraordinary assistance to recover men to the right knowledge and practice of it.

There are others who take natural religion in a sense which is absolutely exclusive of all extraordinary revelation, and in direct opposition to it. By natural religion they understand that religion which men discover in the sole exercise of their natural faculties and powers, without any other

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\* See Dr. Clarke's Discourse on Nat. and Rev. Religion, proposition viii. p. 513 edit. 7.

OR higher assistance. And they discard all pretences to extraordinary revelation, as the effects of enthusiasm or imposture. It is in this sense, that those who call themselves Deists understand natural religion, which they highly extol as the only true religion, the only discovery of truth and duty which can be safely depended upon; and which comprehends the whole of what is necessary to be known and done, in order to the obtaining the favour of God, and attaining true happiness. But they who take natural religion in this sense are not entirely agreed in their scheme.

The ablest advocates for natural religion, as opposed to revelation, assert it to be perfectly clear and obvious to the whole human race, and that it is what all men have a natural knowledge of. They argue, that since religion equally concerneth all mankind, the wisdom and goodness of God require that it should be actually known to all. That since God has given the brutes natural instincts, which guide them certainly and infallibly to answer the proper end of their being, much more must it be supposed that he hath furnished all men with infallible means to direct them to religion and happiness. Thus it is that Lord Herbert frequently argues; and on this foundation it is that he asserts, that God hath imprinted on the minds of all men innate ideas of the main principles of religion and morality. And Dr. Tindal frequently represents it, as if there was a clear universal light shining into the minds of all men, and discovering to them the whole of what is necessary for them to know, believe, and practise; and which cannot be made clearer to any man by an external extraordinary revelation, than it is naturally to all men without it. This is the principle which lies at the foundation of his celebrated book, entitled, "Christianity as Old as the Creation," and which runs through the whole of that boasted performance. And it is, indeed, the only principle on which the scheme of those gentlemen, who pretend that an extraordinary revelation is absolutely needless and useless, can be consistently supported. This last mentioned author often talks as if what is called the law, or re-



ligion of nature, was a perfect scheme of religion and morality, fairly drawn on the mind and heart of every man, in such a manner that it is not possible for any man to mistake it. And he carries it so far as to affirm, that even the most illiterate of the human race, and who cannot so much as read in the mother tongue, have naturally and necessarily a clear and intimate perception of the whole of religion and their duty. And it will be easily owned, that there is no need of an extraordinary revelation to teach men what they all naturally and necessarily know. Nor, indeed, upon that supposition, is there the least need of instructions of any kind, whether by word or writing: and the best way would be (as this gentleman himself sometimes intimates) to leave all men entirely to themselves, and to the pure simple dictates of nature. This way of talking may, perhaps, appear fair and plausible in speculation. It seems to make a beautiful representation of the dignity of our species, and of the universal goodness of God to the whole human race. But, when brought to the test of fact and experience, it appears to be a visionary scheme, no way answering to the truth and reality of the case in the present state of human nature. And one would be apt to wonder, how such a representation could be made to pass upon any man, that has the least knowledge of the world, or of the history of mankind. It supposes religion, in its true nature and in its just extent, to be naturally known to all men; so that they cannot mistake it: and yet nothing is more certain and undeniable, from the history of mankind in all ages, than that they have mistaken it in its important principles and obligations: and that, in order to their having a right sense and discernment of those principles and obligations, they stand in great need of particular instruction and information. It is evident, in fact, that where no care is taken to instruct men, they have scarce any notion of religion at all, but are sunk into the grossest ignorance and barbarism: and, accordingly, the wisest men in all ages have been sensible of the great advantage and necessity of education and instruction. Plutarch, in his treatise, *De Liberis Edu-*

cand. goes so far as to affirm, that “ nature, without learning “or instruction, is a blind thing;” ἡ μὲν φύσις ἀνευ μαθήσεως τυφλὴ.\* And, in his treatise, *De Auditione*, he says, “vice can have access to the soul through many parts of the “body, but virtue can lay hold of a young man only by his “ears,”† by which he receives instruction. Plato, in his sixth book of laws, after having said, that man, if, with a good natural disposition, he happens to have the advantage of right instruction and education, becomes a most divine and gentle animal, adds, that, if he be not sufficiently or properly educated, he is the wildest and most untractable of all earthly animals, ἀγριώτατον ποσὰ φύει γῆ.‡ The philosophers frequently complain of the ignorance and stupidity of the generality of mankind: and this, even when they speak of the people of Athens and Rome, who were undoubtedly the most knowing and civilized among the heathen nations. And they would certainly have thought it a very strange hypothesis to suppose, that every man, even the meanest of the vulgar, is naturally so knowing in religion and morals, as to stand in no need of farther instruction either from God or man.§

Sensible of the inconveniencies of this scheme, others, by natural religion, understand not merely that which is naturally and necessarily known to all men, but that which reason, duly exercised and improved, is able, by its own natural force, to discover, without the assistance of extraordinary revelation. And as to this, it is a question not easy to be resolved, what is the utmost possibility of human reason, or how far our natural faculties, without any higher assistance, may possibly carry us, when raised to the highest degree of improvement of which they are naturally capable. Nor is it

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\* Plutarch Oper. Tom. ii. p. 2. B. Edit. Francof. 1620.

† Ibid. p. 38. A.

‡ Plat. Oper. p. 619. D. Edit. Ficin. Lugd. 1530.

§ I have elsewhere more largely shown the absurdity of this scheme. *Answer to Christianity as Old as the Creation*, vol. I. especially chap. v. See also the view of the deistical writers, vol. I. p. 49, et seq. edit. 3.

a question of much use, since there are many things, which cannot be said to be absolutely above the reach of human capacity, which yet very few of the human race would ever come to know without particular information. The present question, as far as natural religion is concerned in it, is, how far the bulk of mankind, taking them as they are in the present state of the world and of human nature, immersed in flesh and sense, with all their appetites and passions about them, and amidst the many avocations, businesses, and cares in which they are involved, can ordinarily arrive in matters of religion, by the mere force of their own natural powers, without any farther assistance or instruction: If we should suppose that some persons of strong reason and extraordinary judgment and sagacity, were capable, by the mere force of their own reason and studious researches, to make out for themselves a system of religion and morals, in all its main principles and duties, yet this would not reach the case of the generality of mankind, who have neither capacity, nor leisure, nor inclination, for profound enquiries. Nor could these wise men pretend to a sufficient authority for imposing their own sentiments as laws to mankind. Or, if the people should be brought to pay an implicit regard to their dictates, here would a way be opened for what those gentlemen, who set up for the patrons of natural religion, in opposition to revelation, so much dread, priestcraft, and the impositions of designing men.\*

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\* It may not be amiss here to produce the acknowledgment of an ingenious author, who cannot be suspected of being prejudiced in favour of revelation, and has taken pains to convince the world of the contrary. "They," saith he, "who would judge uprightly of the strength of human reason, in matters of morality and religion, under the present corrupt and degenerate state of mankind, ought to take their estimate from those parts of the world, which never had the benefit of revelation: and this, perhaps, may make them less conceited of themselves, and more thankful to God for the light of the gospel." He asks, "if the religion of nature, under the present depravity and corruption of mankind, was written with sufficient strength and clearness upon every man's heart, why might not a Chinese or Indian draw up as good a system of natural religion as a Christian, and why have we never met with any such?" And he adds,

But without entering into a nice speculative disquisition, concerning the powers and abilities of human reason in matters of religion, independent of all revelation, the surest and plainest way of judging is from fact and experience. It is therefore of great moment, for the decision of this point, to enquire what it is that human reason hath actually done this way, when left merely to its own force, without any extraordinary assistance.\* And this cannot be judged of 'from

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“ let us take Confucius, Zoroaster, Plato, Socrates, or the greatest moralist that  
 “ ever lived without the light of revelation, and it will appear, that their best  
 “ systems of morality were intermixed and blended with much superstition, and  
 “ so many gross absurdities as quite eluded and defeated the main design of  
 “ them.” The same author observes, that “ at the time of Christ’s coming into  
 “ the world, mankind in general were in a state of gross ignorance and darkness  
 “ with respect to the true knowledge of God, and of themselves, and of all those  
 “ moral relations and obligations we stand in to the Supreme Being, and to one  
 “ another.”—That “ they were under great uncertainties concerning a future  
 “ state, and the concern of divine Providence in the government of the  
 “ world.—That “ our Saviour’s doctrines on these heads, though they be the  
 “ true and genuine dictates of nature and reason, when he had set them in a pro-  
 “ per light, yet were such as the people never would have known without such an  
 “ instructor, and such means and opportunities of knowledge.” And that it doth  
 “ not follow, that “ because these are natural truths, and moral obligations, there-  
 “ fore there could be no need of revelation to discover them; as the books of  
 “ Euclid and Newton’s Principia contain natural truths, and such as are neces-  
 “ sarily founded in the reason of things, and yet none but a fool or a madman  
 “ would say, that he could have informed himself in these matters as well without  
 “ them.” Dr. Morgan’s Moral Philosopher, vol. I. p. 143, 144, 145.

\* A very learned writer, who will not allow that any single person of the human race ever, in fact, arrived at the right knowledge of God, merely by the natural exercise of his own rational powers, without foreign instruction and assistance, yet does not carry it so far as to affirm, that it is not possible for any man to do so. He observes, that “ in examining how far mankind are able, of themselves, to ex-  
 “ tend their knowledge of religious matters, we must all along mean the bulk of  
 “ mankind, and only regard the common powers of human nature, as they may,  
 “ possibly, be employed and exerted by the individuals of our species in the com-  
 “ mon circumstances of human life; so that although one man, or some few men,  
 “ in this or that age or place of the world, should happen, by some lucky juncture,  
 “ from one step to another, to come at length to show themselves able to discover  
 “ the being and perfections of God, the immortality of the soul, and other articles  
 “ of natural religion, yet this uncommon event can never be accounted a fair  
 “ standard, whereby to judge of the common powers and abilities of the bulk of  
 “ mankind.” Campbell’s Necessity of Revelation, p. 64. He expresses himself  
 to the same purpose, p. 66, and 72.

any systems formed by persons that live in ages and countries which have enjoyed the light of divine revelation, and where its discoveries, doctrines, and laws, have been received and entertained; since in this case it may reasonably be supposed, that they have borrowed light from revelation, though they are not willing to acknowledge it, or may not themselves be sensible of it. And therefore systems drawn up by our modern admirers of natural religion in Christian countries, cannot be brought in proof of the force of unassisted reason in matters of religion. And the same may be said of those Pagan philosophers who lived after Christianity had made some progress in the world.

Nor can the sufficiency of the light of natural reason, left merely to itself, without the aids of revelation, be regularly argued from the systems of the ancient philosophers, lawgivers, and moralists, who lived before the Christian revelation was published; except it can be shown, that they themselves derived the religious and moral principles which they taught, solely and entirely from the researches and disquisitions of their own reason, and disclaimed their having had any assistance, with regard to those truths and principles, from tradition or divine instruction. And it is no hard matter to show by testimonies from the most celebrated ancients, that this was not the case, nor was it what they assumed to themselves. It is a thing well known, that the most admired philosophers of Greece did not pretend to set up merely on their own stock, but travelled into Egypt, and different parts of the East, to improve their knowledge by conversation with the sages of those countries; who themselves professed to have derived their knowledge, not merely from the disquisitions of their own reason, but from a higher source, from very ancient traditions, to which for the most part they assigned a divine original. And indeed, supposing an original revelation to have been communicated to the first parents and ancestors of the human race, which (I shall show) there is great reason to believe, the most considerable vestiges of it were to be expected in the eastern nations, which lay nearest to the

seat of the first men; and from which the rest of the world had their knowledge of religion and letters. To this it may be added, that the most celebrated and sagacious of the ancient philosophers made pathetic complaints of human darkness and ignorance, and the great difficulties they met with in searching after truth. Many of them were sensible of the great need there was of a divine instruction and assistance, for enlightening and directing mankind in matters of religion and their duty.\* So that no argument can be justly drawn from the wise men and philosophers among the ancients, to show that the knowledge of what is usually called natural religion, in its just extent, is wholly and originally owing to the force of human reason, exclusive of all divine revelation. And perhaps it would not be easy to mention any nations, among whom any true knowledge of religion has been preserved, concerning which we can be assured, that they never had any benefit from the light of divine revelation; and that the principles of religious truth and duty, which were to be found among them, were originally the mere product of natural reason, without any higher assistance. Several things may be observed amongst them, which seem to be the remains of an ancient universal tradition, or primeval religion, derived from the remotest antiquity, and which, probably, had their original source in divine revelation, though, in process of time, it was greatly altered and corrupted. This is only mentioned here, but will be more fully considered in the sequel of this treatise.

## SECT. II.

### OF REVEALED RELIGION.

By revealed religion is commonly understood that knowledge of religion, which was originally communicated from God to

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\* This is particularly shown in Dr. Clarke's Discourse of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 304, et seq. and in Dr. Ellis's "Knowledge of Divine Things from "Revelation, not from Nature or Reason."

men in a way of extraordinary revelation, for instructing them in important religious truth, and directing and engaging them to the practice of their duty. In a general sense, all truth, and the manifestation of it, may be said to come from God, even that which we discover in the ordinary use of those rational faculties which he hath given us. But when we speak of revealed religion; as distinguished from that which is usually called natural, it is to be understood of that knowledge of religion, which was originally communicated in an extraordinary and supernatural way. And such a revelation must either be by an immediate infallible inspiration or illumination of every particular person, for enlightening and directing him in the knowledge and practice of religion; or by God's making an extraordinary discovery of himself and of his will to some person or persons, to be by them communicated to others in his name. In the former case, it could not be properly called extraordinary revelation: for if it were a universal infallible light, imparted to every single person, in every nation and every age, from the beginning of the world, it would be as common and familiar to every one as the common light of reason, and by being universal would cease to be extraordinary. That this is possible to the divine power, cannot be doubted; but it is evident, in fact, that this is not the way which it hath pleased the divine wisdom to take with mankind. For if every man were inspired with the knowledge of religion in a way of immediate infallible revelation, it could not possibly have happened, that the most of mankind, in all ages, have been involved in darkness and error, and have fallen into a gross ignorance of true religion, and into the most absurd superstitions and idolatries. If, therefore, there be such a thing as revealed religion; if it hath pleased God to make discoveries of his will to mankind with regard to religious truth and duty, in a way of extraordinary revelation,—the most natural way, and that which is best accommodated to the present state of mankind, seems to be this; that the revelation should be imparted to some person or persons, to be by them communicated to others in his

name;\* at the same time furnishing them with sufficient proofs and credentials, to show that they were indeed sent and inspired by him; and that the doctrines and laws they publish to the world in his name, were really and originally communicated by revelation from him. For in this method there is sufficient proof given to satisfy well disposed minds, and provision is made for instructing men, if it be not their own faults, in the knowledge of religion, and engaging them to the practice of the duties it requireth: and at the same time, there is room for the exercise of reason, for examination and inquiry into the nature of the evidence, and for the trial of men's sincerity and diligence, of their impartial love of truth, and openness to receive it.

With regard to revelation as now explained, several questions arise, which deserve to be considered. The first relates to the possibility of it. The second to the usefulness and expediency, or even necessity of it, in the present state of mankind. The third relates to the proofs and evidences, whereby it may be shown, that such a revelation hath been actually given.

That God can, if he thinks fit, make a revelation of himself, and his will to men, in an extraordinary way, different from the discoveries made by men themselves in the mere natural and ordinary use of their own rational faculties and powers, appears to me to be so evident, that I do not see how any man that believes a God and a providence, can reasonably deny it. For if the power of God be almighty, it must extend to what-

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\* When we speak of the revelation's being communicated to others, besides those who originally and immediately received it from God, this is to be understood of the matter of that revelation, or the doctrines and laws which are thus revealed. For though the inspiration itself, considered as an act of God upon the mind, is a personal thing, and cannot be communicated by the person who receives it to others, yet the doctrines and laws he thus receives from God, may be by him communicated to others by word and writing, as readily as if he had received them in the ordinary and natural way. And they to whom they are thus communicated, are obliged to receive them as of divine authority, in proportion to the proofs and evidences which are given them, that the person that delivered them was indeed sent of God, and received them by revelation from him.



soever doth not imply a contradiction, which cannot be pretended in this case. We cannot distinctly explain the origin of our ideas, or the way in which they are excited or impressed on the human mind. But we know that these ways are very various. And can it be supposed, that the Author of our beings hath it not in his power to communicate ideas to our minds, for instructing and informing us in what it nearly concerneth us to know? Our not being able clearly to explain the manner in which this is done, is no just objection against it. For this we have the acknowledgment of a noble and ingenious writer, who is of a distinguished rank among the opposers of revelation. He observes, that "an extraordinary action of God upon the human mind, which the word inspiration is now used to denote, is not more inconceivable than the ordinary action of mind on body, or body on mind." And that "it is impertinent to deny the existence of any phenomenon, merely because we cannot account for it."\*

And as it cannot reasonably be denied, that God can, if he sees fit, communicate his will to men in a way of extraordinary revelation, so he can do it in such a manner, as to give those to whom this revelation is originally and immediately made, a full and certain assurance of its being a true divine revelation. This naturally follows upon the former. For to suppose that God can communicate his will in a way of extraordinary revelation, and yet is not able to give a sufficient assurance to the person or persons to whom he thus reveals his will, that the revelation comes from him, is evidently absurd and contradictory. It is, in effect, to say, that he can reveal his will, but has no way of making men know that he does so: which is a most unreasonable limitation of the divine power and wisdom.† He that pretends to pronounce that this is impossible, is bound to show where the impossibility of it lies. If men, like ourselves, can communicate their thoughts by speech or language

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\* Lord Bolingbroke's Works, vol. II. p. 468. edit. 4to.

† See concerning this, Answer to Christianity as Old as the Creation, vol. II. chap. i. p. 3, 4. 2d edit.

in such a way as that we may certainly know who it is that speaks to us, it would be a strange thing to affirm, that God, on supposition of his communicating his mind and will to any person or persons in a way of extraordinary revelation, has no way of causing them to know that it is he, and no other, that makes this discovery to them. The ingenious author of the *Moral Philosopher* was sensible of this. He expressly grants, that "God may communicate and convey spiritual and divine truth, either mediately or immediately as he thinks fit; either by the superior strength and extent of men's own natural faculties, or by any more immediate supernatural illumination." And again, that "God may reveal or discover truth to the mind in a way superior to what is common and natural." And he owns, that "immediate inspiration or revelation from God may communicate a certainty to the man thus immediately inspired, equal to that which ariseth from a mathematical demonstration."\* Though he will not allow, that the knowledge of such truth can go any farther upon divine authority, or as a matter of divine faith, than to the person or persons thus inspired, or to whom the revelation is immediately made.

This leads me to another observation on this subject; and that is, that God can commission those to whom he has made an extraordinary revelation of his will, to communicate to others what they have received from him, and can furnish them with such credentials of their divine mission, as are sufficient to prove that he sent them, and that the doctrines and laws they deliver in his name, were indeed received from God. It must be acknowledged, that though the persons to whom the original revelation was made, were ever so sure that it is a true divine revelation, and that they received it from God; their being certain of it is no assurance to others, except they be able to give some farther proofs and evidences, which may be sufficient to show the justness of their pretensions. It is true, that if they appear from their whole conduct and cha-

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\* *Moral Philosopher*, vol. I. page 82, 83, 84. and vol. II. p. 44, 45.

never to be excellent persons, of great piety, probity, and simplicity, not actuated by worldly ambition, avarice, or sensuality, nor carried away by a disordered imagination and hot-brained enthusiasm, but of sound and sober minds; if the revelation they profess to have received from God hath nothing in it contrary to the evident dictates of right reason, and is of an excellent tendency, manifestly directed to the glory of God, and to the good of mankind, and to promote the cause of truth, righteousness, and virtue in the world; if the doctrines and laws they publish in the name of God be of such a nature, and have such a degree of wisdom, goodness, and purity in them, as is vastly superior to what could have been expected in an ordinary way from the persons by whom they were published to the world, and therefore could not be reasonably supposed to be the product of their own invention; and if there be nothing in the whole that gives a just suspicion of artful imposture, or a design to impose upon mankind, but such to the contrary,—these must be owned to be strong presumptive arguments in their favour. But still it may be reasonably expected, that if God commissions persons to deliver doctrines and laws to the world in his name, he will furnish them with positive proofs and evidences sufficient to convince reasonable and well disposed minds that he sent them. That it is possible for God to give such proofs and evidences, cannot, without great absurdity, be denied. The omnipotent Author of nature, and Lord of the universe, can undoubtedly, if he thinks fit, enable such persons to perform the most wonderful works in his name as a proof that he sent them; works of such a nature, and so circumstanced, as manifestly to transcend all human power, and bear the evident marks of a divine interposition.\* He can also endue them

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\* Some of the most noted opposers of revelation have made concessions which tend to show, that miracles, supposing them to have been really performed, may be of such a nature, as to yield a sufficient proof of the divine mission of the persons by whom, and of the divine authority of doctrines and laws in attestation of which, they are wrought. Mr. Collins acknowledges, that “miracles, when done

with supernatural gifts, and enable them to give express predictions of future contingent events, which no human sagacity could foresee; and which yet shall be accomplished in the proper season. That God can, in his inexhaustible power and wisdom, by these and other methods, signify to the world that he sent them, and give a divine attestation to the doctrines and laws delivered by them, in his name, no man, that has just notions of the Deity, can consistently deny. A writer, who has distinguished himself in opposition to Revelation, has thought fit to own, that "when men are sunk into gross ignorance and error, and are greatly vitiated in their affections and passions, then God may (for any reason, says he, that I can see to the contrary) kindly interpose by a special application of his power and providence, and reveal to men such useful truths as otherwise they might be ignorant of, or might not attend to; and also lay before them such rules of life as they ought to walk by, and likewise press their obedience with proper motives, and thereby lead them to repentance and reformation." This seems to be a fair concession; but he endeavours, as far as in him lies, to render it ineffectual by adding, "but then that it is so, and when it is so, will, in the nature of the thing, be a matter of doubt and disputation."\* And elsewhere he confidently affirms, that "in what way soever God communicateth knowledge to men, it must always be a matter of uncertainty whether the revelation be divine or not: and that we have no rule to judge, or from which we can with certainty dis-

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"in proof of doctrines and precepts that are consistent with reason, and for the honour of God and the good of mankind, ought to determine men to believe and receive them." *Scheme of Literal Prophecy considered*, p. 321, 322. Mr Woolston says, "I believe it will be granted, on all hands, that the restoring a person indisputably dead to life, is a stupendous miracle; and that two or three such miracles, well attested and credibly reported, are enough to conciliate the belief, that the author of them was a divine agent, and invested with the power of God." See his 5th Discourse on Miracles, p. 3. And Spinoza is said to have declared that, if he could believe that the resurrection of Lazarus was really wrought, as it is related, he would give up his system.

\* Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. I. p. 292, 293.

“tinguish, divine revelation from delusion.”\* The plain meaning of which is this, that if we should suppose, which is the case this author himself puts, both that men stand in need of an extraordinary revelation from God, and that God sees fit to interpose, by a special application of his power and providence, to grant such a revelation, yet he has it not in his power to effect this kind design, or to make it known to the world that he really gives such a revelation, though his goodness should incline him to do so, and the circumstances of mankind should require it. This seems to me to be, in effect, an entering a protest against the Almighty, and a declaring beforehand, that let him do what he can to assure us of his having given such a revelation of his will, we are resolved not to believe it.

Another thing which ought to be observed upon this subject is, that not only they who live in the age when the revelation was first published to the world, may have such proofs of it as may be sufficient to convince them of its divine authority and original, but that it may be transmitted with such evidence to those that live in succeeding ages, as may lay them under an obligation to receive and submit to it, as a revelation from God. Supposing doctrines and laws to have been originally communicated in a way of extraordinary revelation, all that would be necessary to render that revelation useful to distant ages and nations would be, that the doctrines and laws, which are the subject matter of this revelation, together with an authentic account of the proofs and evidences by which the divine original and authority of that revelation was attested and confirmed, should be faithfully transmitted to succeeding generations. In this case, those to whom it is thus transmitted, enjoy the benefit of that revelation, and may be said to have the light of it, as really, though not so immediately, communicated to them, as if they had lived in the age when it was first given. It must be acknowledged that oral tradition is not a very sure conveyance. But it is manifest that


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\* Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. II. p. 5.

writings may be transmitted with such a degree of evidence, as to leave no room for reasonable doubt. This is the most simple and natural way of propagating the knowledge of revelation to succeeding ages. If, therefore, that revelation had any original authority, then, on supposition that those of succeeding generations have sufficient evidence to assure them of its having been safely transmitted, it is really of as divine authority to them, as it was to those to whom it was first published, and they are obliged to receive and submit to it, as such: since, on this supposition, they have those very doctrines and laws in their hands, which were originally communicated by divine revelation, and have also a sufficient assurance of the truth of those extraordinary facts and evidences, by which it was originally attested and confirmed. No man is able to show, that there is any thing absurd in this supposition. And it may be, and has often been, clearly proved, that what is here supposed as possible, is actually fact, with regard to the revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures: and that we have greater evidence of the safe transmission of those sacred writings, without any general and material corruption and alteration, than we have concerning other books, the genuineness of which is universally acknowledged.

I know of nothing which can be objected against this, but the uncertainty of moral evidence, and the fallibility of historical human testimony. It is easy to declaim plausibly on this subject; but allowing all that can be reasonably alleged to show that it is often fallacious, and not to be depended upon, it cannot be denied that this kind of evidence may be, and frequently is, so circumstanced, that the man would scarce be thought in his senses that should seriously deny or doubt of it. It is by moral evidence, and the testimony of fallible men, capable of deceiving and being deceived, that a man, who has never been at Paris or Rome, knows that there are such cities, and yet he can no more reasonably doubt of it than if he had seen them with his own eyes. It is by moral evidence that we have all our laws and records, and the assurance of any past facts. And yet is there any man of sense, that does not

as certainly believe many facts which were done, in former ages, as he believes any event that has happened of late years, and within his own memory? It is manifest that the Author of our beings, and the wise Governor of the world, designed that a great part of our knowledge should come in this way, and that we should be governed and determined by this kind of evidence and testimony in many cases of great importance. The necessity we are under of doing this ariseth from the very frame of our nature, and the constitution of things, and from the circumstances in which we are placed in the world, and consequently from the will and appointment of God himself. Why then should it be thought absurd to suppose, that he should so order it, that our knowledge of some important matters relating to religion should also come in this way of conveyance? If God has been pleased, in a former age, to make a revelation of his will to mankind, designed for the use not only of that but of succeeding ages; and if this revelation, with its doctrines and laws, be transmitted to us, in that way of conveyance which we ourselves should count unquestionable in other cases, and with as much evidence as we could reasonably expect, supposing a revelation to have been really given in past ages; and if we have as much assurance of the extraordinary facts whereby it was originally attested, as we could fairly expect concerning any past facts, supposing those facts to have been really done; God may justly require us to receive and submit to that revelation. And he that receives it upon that evidence, acts a wise and good part, becoming a reasonable being and moral agent. To demand that God should continually send new revelations to assure us of his having formerly given us a well-attested revelation, and should cause the same facts to be done over again for our conviction, would be the most unreasonable thing in the world. At that rate, those extraordinary facts must be repeated, in every age, in every nation, and for the satisfaction of every single person; for one hath as much right to demand it as another; and, by being thus common, they would cease to be extraordinary: and this very thing would hinder the effect. Miracles are not



to be multiplied without necessity. Nor can it be reasonably supposed, that God will interpose, in an extraordinary way, to assure us of past facts, when the ordinary is sufficient, and when they come to us with as great evidence as the nature of the thing will admit of, and which we ourselves should count sufficient, in any other case.

What has been offered may be of use to remove some prejudices against revelation in general, and to show that there is no absurdity in supposing that there may be such a thing as revealed religion.

But although it cannot reasonably be denied, that God can, if he pleases, make an extraordinary revelation of his will, accompanied with sufficient evidence to convince those to whom it is made known of its divine authority, yet it cannot be supposed that he would do this, if it were of no real use or advantage to mankind. For it is not reasonable to believe that an infinitely wise God would take such an extraordinary method, if there were no necessity for it, and if it would answer no valuable end at all.

The next thing, therefore, to be considered, after having shown that an extraordinary revelation from God is possible, is the great usefulness and advantage of divine revelation, and the need there is of it, in the present state of mankind, for supporting and promoting the interests of religion and virtue in the world. And there are several considerations, from which it may be justly concluded, that a well-attested revelation from God would be of great advantage, and a signal instance of the divine grace and goodness towards us.

It may be of great use even with regard to those truths and principles which lie at the foundation of all religion ; such as the truths relating to the excellent and unparalleled nature, the perfections and attributess of the one supreme God. The generality of mankind seem not to be well qualified to pursue these truths, and deduce them from clear and certain principles, in an orderly chain of argumentation. They are so taken up with their worldly concerns, and carried off by a variety of pleasures and cares, so entangled in sensible and ma-



terial objects, that, if left merely to themselves, there is little likelihood of their forming right ideas of things spiritual and invisible. It is generally by education and instruction that these principles first enter into their minds; and, where they have not been taught or instructed, they know little or nothing about them. And even as to persons of philosophical minds, who apply themselves to abstract inquiries, and professedly search into the nature of things, how apt they are, when trusting merely to the powers of their own reason, to form wrong notions of the Deity, and how strangely bewildered in their inquiries on this subject, the following book will afford many melancholy proofs. A noble author, who is an avowed patron of natural religion as opposed to revelation, tells us, that "Theists will concur in ascribing all possible perfections to the Supreme Being:" but then he adds, that "they will always differ when they descend into any detail, and pretend to be particular about them; as they have always differed in their notions of those perfections."\* I think, therefore, it cannot reasonably be denied, that a true divine revelation might be of great use for giving men a more clear and certain knowledge of that most adorable Being, and his glorious attributes, than they would otherwise have attained to, and for preventing or rectifying those errors they might be apt to fall into, in matters of such importance, and which are so far above our reach. For who so fit to declare his own nature and perfections, as far as it is proper and needful for us to know them, as God himself? And it is what one would think every real and well-disposed Theist should earnestly wish for, that God would be graciously pleased to make such a clear and express revelation of himself and his perfections, as might direct men in forming just and worthy notions of the Divinity, especially of what it most nearly concerneth us to know, his moral attributes.

Another matter of great importance, in which a divine revelation might be of eminent use, relateth to the providence

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\* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. V. p. 255, 4to.

of God. If left merely to our own reasonings and conjectures, many doubts might arise in our minds, whether that infinitely glorious Majesty, who is exalted above our highest conceptions, would concern himself about such inconsiderable beings as we are, or any of the things relating to us. And as there are many who are uneasy at the thoughts of God's exercising a continual inspection over our actions, this would naturally bias them to lay hold on any pretence for rejecting it. But if God should condescend, by an express revelation, confirmed by sufficient evidence, to assure us of his concern for the individuals of the human race; that he takes cognizance of their actions, and orders the events relating to them; this would be the most effectual way to dispel their doubts, to strike bad men with a wholesome fear, and to inspire the good and virtuous with a cheerful hope, an entire resignation, and a steady affiance.

That some kind of religious worship and homage ought to be rendered to God by his reasonable creatures, seems to be a dictate of reason and nature. But what kind of worship will be most acceptable to the Supreme Being, and what rites are most proper to be made use of, in his service, unassisted reason cannot pretend positively and with certainty to determine. Even with respect to the offering up prayers to God for the things we stand in need of, which is that part of religious worship in which mankind seem to have been most generally agreed,\* how far this might be proper, or consistent with the veneration we owe his sovereign greatness and majesty, might be matter of doubt and scruple, without some signification of his will concerning it. And accordingly some persons, who have made great pretensions to wisdom, and a regard to the law of nature, have endeavoured to set aside this part of our duty. But if God should, by an express revelation, appoint the rites of his own worship, and show men what kind of service he doth require, and will accept; if he should not only

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\* This seems to have been part of the primitive religion derived from the first parents of the human race, and which was originally owing to divine revelation.

allow, but command them to offer up their prayers and supplications to him, and give them directions for the right performance of this duty, encouraging them to it by the most gracious promises; this would certainly, to all who believe and receive such a revelation, be a great satisfaction and advantage.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retributions, is of mighty importance to mankind; and the natural and moral arguments to prove it are of no small weight; but yet there are several things to be opposed to them, which weaken the evidence, and may minister ground of suspicion and doubt, if considered merely on the foot of natural reason. And accordingly some of the most eminent ancient philosophers either denied it, or expressed themselves doubtfully and waveringly concerning it. And though the general principle, that God will, at one time or other, either here or hereafter, reward good men, and punish the wicked, is very agreeable to right reason; yet, with regard to several particulars comprehended under this general principle, and upon which the right use and application of it in a great measure depend, the unassisted light of reason can give us little information. But, if God himself should, by a well-attested revelation, assure us, that death shall not put an utter end to our being; that this present life is only the first stage of our existence; that we shall be raised again from the dead, and that God will call all men to an account, and reward or punish them in a future state, according to their behaviour in this; and should also signify to us the nature of those rewards and punishments, and the qualifications of the persons on whom they shall be conferred or inflicted; this must needs be of high advantage, and tend to give us satisfaction, in a point of considerable importance, for encouraging men to the practice of virtue, and deterring them from vice and wickedness.

The light of nature and reason may give us some general ground of hope, that God will show mercy to sinners upon their repentance and amendment: but how far this mercy shall extend; whether he will pardon all manner of sins, even

those of the most heinous kind, frequently repeated and long persisted in, barely upon repentance and amendment; and whether his pardon in that case will be only a mitigation or remission of the threatened penalty, without a full restitution to grace and favour; and how far he will reward an obedience attended with failures and defects; these things might create anxious doubts and perplexities to serious and thoughtful minds. Especially when it is further considered, that reason leadeth us to regard God as just as well as merciful, a wise and righteous governor, who will therefore exercise his pardoning mercy in such a way as seemeth most fit to his rectoral wisdom, and will best answer the ends of moral government. And of this such short-sighted creatures as we are cannot pretend to be competent judges. It must, therefore, be a mighty advantage to be assured, by express revelation from God, what the terms are upon which he will receive his guilty offending creatures to his grace and favour; that he will grant them a full pardon of all their iniquities, though they may have been very great and heinous, upon their true repentance and reformation; that he will not only deliver them from the penalties they had incurred by their sins, but will confer upon them the most glorious privileges and benefits; and that he will reward their dutiful and sincere obedience, though imperfect, and falling short of what the law in strictness requires, with eternal life and happiness. This must be an unspeakable satisfaction to creatures conscious to themselves of many failures and defects. And it must also give them great comfort and encouragement to be assured, by express promises from God, that if they use their own earnest endeavours, in the performance of their duty, he will grant them the gracious assistances of his Holy Spirit, when, from a sense of their own weakness, they humbly apply to him for them. To have these things ascertained to us by a divine authority and testimony, must needs have a great tendency to fill the hearts of good men with a pious confidence and joy, and to animate them to a persevering diligence and constancy in well doing, amidst

the many difficulties and temptations to which they are exposed, in this present state.

With respect to moral obligations, as comprehending the duties we owe to God, our neighbours, and ourselves, whatever certainty we might have of the grounds of those obligations in general, yet we might be greatly at a loss, if left merely to our unassisted reason, as to the particular laws and duties comprehended under those general rules. There may be duties which seem to be agreeable to reason, and yet cannot be clearly proved, by arguments from the nature of the thing, to be necessarily obligatory. There may be such objections brought against them, and with some appearance of reason, as may very much weaken the force and influence of them; especially if, as is often the case, a strong appetite, or apparent worldly interest, happens to be on the other side. But a divine revelation, determining our duty in those instances, would soon decide the point, and give those laws and duties a weight and force which would over-rule the contrary pretences. And I may appeal to the common sense of mankind, whether a clear and positive revelation from God, declaring what it is that he requireth of us with respect to the particulars of our duty, would not be a vast advantage: and whether, in that case, men would not come far more easily and certainly to the knowledge of their duty, than if they were left to collect it, every man for himself, from the reasons and fitnesses of things; or from what he might take to be the dictates of his own nature, and conducive to his own happiness; as to which, through the prevalence of appetites and passions, men are very apt to pass wrong judgments; or from the reasonings of philosophers and moralists, who are far from agreeing in their sentiments; or, if they did, are not to be absolutely depended upon, and have no authority to make their sentiments pass for laws obligatory upon mankind.

The last thing I shall here observe, with regard to the usefulness or necessity of divine revelation is, that there may be

several things, which it may be of great advantage to us to know, which yet are of such a nature, that we could not pretend at all to discover them merely by the force of our own reason; as being things that do not lie within our reach, or which depend upon the free counsels of God. It is evident that in such cases a divine revelation is the only means of discovery : and our certainty rises in proportion to the proofs and evidences we have that it is a divine testimony.

These several considerations are sufficient to show that a true divine revelation, supposing God to give it to the world, would be of great advantage : and that there is great need of it in the present state of mankind. And where such a revelation is given, and there is sufficient proof of its divine authority, it ought to be received with the profoundest submission and veneration, and with the highest thankfulness. But we are to take this along with us, that divine revelation is not designed to supersede the use of our own reason, or to render the exercise of it needless, but to guide, improve, and perfect it.

Revelation is far from discarding or weakening any argument that can be justly brought from reason, in proof of any truths relating to religion or morality ; but adds to them the attestation of a divine authority or testimony, which must needs be of great weight. This both gives a farther degree of certainty with regard to those things which are in some degree discoverable by the light of reason, and furnisheth a sufficient ground of assent, with respect to those things which have unassisted reason, if left to itself, could not have discovered, and which yet it may be of use to us to know.

By the common consent of mankind, a competent authority is, in many cases, a good and proper medium to assure us of the truth of things. And to believe upon the credit of such an authority and testimony is so far from being a renouncing our reason, as some have pretended, that, on the contrary, it is what reason and good sense require, and to refuse it would be to act an absurd and unreasonable

part.\* And particularly supposing an extraordinary revelation from God, and that of this we are convinced by sufficient proof, it is very reasonable to receive what is there revealed, upon the authority of the revealer. And indeed it would be a contradiction to believe it to be a revelation from God, and yet refuse our assent to it: since it is a most evident principle, that as God is incapable of deceiving or being deceived, whatsoever he hath revealed must be true.

That God hath made a revelation of his will to men, hath been the general sense of mankind in all ages and nations. This might have been originally owing to a tradition of some extraordinary revelation or revelations really communicated in the earliest times, to the first ancestors of the human race; from whom it was transmitted to their descendants, though, in process of time, in a great measure corrupted and lost. Or at least it shows that men have generally thought that a revelation from God to men was both possible and probable; and that this was agreeable to the ideas they had formed of the wisdom and goodness of God, and of his concern for mankind. It also shows, that they were sensible of the need they stood in of such extraordinary discoveries from God, to instruct and direct them in the knowledge of his will and their duty. It must be owned, indeed, that this notion of an intercourse between God and men, in a way of extraordinary revelation, has given occasion to impostures and delusions; that it has induced men of warm imaginations to take their own reveries, the workings of their distempered brain and fancies, for divine inspirations; and that artful impostors have taken advantage from it to put their own inventions upon the people for divine discoveries and injunctions; in order to answer the ends of their ambition and avarice, and to erect a tyranny over the minds and consciences of men. This has opened a

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\* See concerning this, Answer to Christianity as Old as the Creation, vol. II. chap. I. p. 17. et seq. edit. 2d.

large field for declamation. But it affords no reasonable presumption, that there never was a true revelation given from God to men. All that can be fairly concluded from it is, that the best and most excellent things may be perverted and abused by the folly and wickedness of men. The same way of arguing has been employed by Atheists, to show that mankind had better be without any religion at all; and that there is no way of preventing or curing the mischiefs of superstition, but by denying a God and a providence. And it might as plausibly be pretended, that all kinds of civil government and polity ought to be rejected, and that it would be better for mankind, that there were no civil government at all. And yet I believe every considerate and impartial person will be of opinion, that all the mischiefs which have ever arisen from the abuse of religion and civil government, fall vastly short of the evils of Atheism and universal anarchy; which would bring along with them a dissolution of all order, and of the strongest bands of society; and would produce such a scene of confusion and licentiousness, that a wise and good man would be apt to prefer non-existence before it.\*

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\* Cotta in Cicero has, in like manner, with great eloquence, displayed the mischiefs of reason, and has endeavoured to show that it would be better for mankind to be without it; and that if the gods had intended to do them harm, they could not have given them a worse thing. *De Nat. Deor.* l. 5. cap. xxvi. et seq. et cap. xxxiii. The sum of what he there offers to show that reason is not the gift of God, is because of the abuse that has been made of it. And whereas it might be said that there are some who make a good use of their reason, he answers that these are very few; and it cannot be supposed that God would only consult the welfare, or provide for the benefit of a few. If he did it for any, he would do it for all. "*Si mens voluntasque divina idcirco consuluit hominibus, quod iis est largita rationem, iis solis consuluit, quos bona ratione donavit: quos videmus, si modo ulli sint, esse perpaucos. Non placet autem paucis a Diis immortalibus esse consultum: Sequitur ergo ut nemini consultum sit.*" *Ibid* cap. xxvii. p. 319. It is after the same manner that some have argued, that, if the benefit of divine revelation were given to any, it must be given equally to all; and since it is manifest it is not given to all, this shows it is not given to any. This certainly would be thought a very absurd way of talking in any other case. It by no means follows, that because some persons or nations seem to be advantageously distinguished above others, by having better means of religious or moral



Besides, it must be considered, that these gentlemen who make this objection against the usefulness of divine revelation, do not believe that there ever was a real divine revelation given to mankind. They cannot, therefore, justly argue from the mischiefs which they mention, and take so much pains to exaggerate, that a real and well-attested revelation would be of no use or benefit to the world ! Since, upon their supposition, the mischief was only owing to falsely pretended ones. And I cannot well see what method these gentlemen could take to prevent it. If they themselves should set up for instructors of the people, what security could we have that in that case they would not come in time to act the priests, and take advantage to impose upon the ignorance and credulity of mankind for answering their own political and interested views ? Much of that false religion that is in the world has been owing to men, who, in reality, had no religion at all. And it may justly be affirmed that a real divine revelation, published for the use of mankind, and confirmed by sufficient evidence, would, if duly attended to, be the best and most effectual preservative against the abuses and mischiefs arising from falsely pretended ones. This would be the most likely means to furnish the people with just notions of religion, and to rescue them from that ignorance which exposes them to imposture and delusion, and tends to render them a prey to artful and designing men. And it is certain, in fact, that, in those parts of the world, where the Christian revelation, as contained in the holy Scriptures, is most generally received and spread among the people, the great principles of what is usually called natural religion are most generally believed, and best understood ; and, at the same time, the people, by being acquainted with the holy Scriptures, are the least liable to be imposed upon by superstition and priestcraft.\* It is a thing

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improvement, therefore they are to deny or slight their own advantages, and not acknowledge them as the gifts and blessings of divine providence, nor be thankful to God for them.

\* This is what I have endeavoured particularly to show : Answer to Christianity as Old as the Creation, vol. I. chap. ix.

not to be contested, that what abuses have been or are found among professed Christians, have not been owing to their adherence to that revelation, but to their deviations from it. And the best and most effectual remedy against those abuses and corruptions, would be to keep close to the original rule of faith and practice laid down in those sacred writings.

The considerations which have been offered are sufficient to show the possibility of an extraordinary revelation from God to men ; and also, that such a revelation would be of great use, and is very needful in the present state of mankind, for leading them to the knowledge and practice of religion. And whosoever duly considers this, will be apt to conclude, from the goodness of God and the necessities of mankind, that God hath not left men at all times destitute of such a valuable help for maintaining true religion in the world, and engaging them to the practice of piety and virtue. And accordingly it pleased God, in his great goodness, to communicate the knowledge of religion, in its main fundamental principles, to the first parents and ancestors of the human race, to be by them transmitted to their posterity. This primitive religion became greatly corrupted in the succeeding ages, especially in what related to the knowledge and worship of the one true God : and the nations were generally fallen into the most gross idolatry and polytheism. God might justly have left mankind without any further extraordinary discoveries of his will ; but he saw fit, in his great wisdom and goodness, to grant a new revelation, which was particularly designed to establish, by the most amazing exertions and displays of his divine power and majesty, the sovereign glory and dominion of the only true supreme God, in opposition to all idol deities : as also to give a system of written laws, enforced by his divine authority, containing the chief duties of morality in plain and express precepts : and likewise to keep up the faith and hope of that great Saviour of mankind, who had been promised from the beginning, and to prepare the way for his coming by a series of illustrious prophecies. This revelation, though immediately given to a particular people, was intended to be of use to other nations ; and

really was so, in several respects, for preserving some knowledge of true religion in the world, when it seemed to be in a great measure defaced and lost. This was succeeded, at the distance of several ages, by the most complete and perfect dispensation of religion that ever the world saw, and which was brought by that glorious and divine Person, whose coming had been so long promised and foretold, and who actually accomplished all the great things which had been spoken of him by the ancient prophets. By means of this revelation, the knowledge and worship of the one true God came to be restored among the nations, which had been sunk in idolatry and polytheism for many ages: the best and noblest ideas are there given of God, and of the spiritual worship to be rendered to him: precepts of the purest morality are published to mankind, setting the whole of our duty before us, in its just extent: the most wonderful displays are made of the exceeding riches of the divine grace and mercy towards perishing sinners of the human race; and the gracious terms and glorious promises of the new covenant are placed in the clearest light. The most express assurances are given us of a future state of retributions, some imperfect notions of which had long continued among the nations, but at length, through the corruption of mankind, and the false subtleties of men pretending to wisdom and philosophy, had been almost entirely defaced. The future punishments\* of the obstinately wicked and impenitent are strongly asserted, and the fullest discoveries made of a blessed resurrection, and of eternal life and felicity for good men, as the reward of their sincere though imperfect obedience.

These several dispensations yield mutual light and support to one another. The same scheme of religion for substance is carried through them all, but is especially completed in the last. This which comes nearest to our own times, and was accompanied with a fulness of evidence proportioned to its vast importance, gives an illustrious attestation to the preceding dispensations. And as each of them have distinct evidences of their own, so there is a conjunct evidence arising from the harmony of them when compared together, which exhibiteth

a pleasing view of the divine wisdom and goodness towards mankind.

It is not my design at present to enter upon a particular consideration of the proofs that are brought for the divine authority of the Jewish and Christian revelation; both of which refer to and confirm the original revelation made to mankind from the beginning. This has been done by many learned pens with great strength of reason and argument; and I have, on some former occasions, contributed my endeavours this way.\* Little has been opposed to the arguments which have been offered on this subject, but suspicions and presumptions, and often gross misrepresentations and rude ridicule; or such particular difficulties and objections as do not affect the main of the evidence. Nor have I met with any thing, that could deserve the name of a fair and direct attempt, to invalidate the evidence of the extraordinary and important facts, by which the divine original and authority of those revelations is attested and established. The principal thing on which the adversaries of religion seem to rely, is the supposed sufficiency of human reason, when left merely to its own unassisted force and strength, for all the purposes of religion; from whence it is inferred, that an extraordinary revelation is entirely needless and useless. But how little foundation there is for this pretence, I propose to show from undeniable fact and experience, in the ensuing treatise.

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\* See the Answer to Christianity as Old as the Creation, vol. II. especially the six first chapters. See also the Divine Authority of the Old and New Testament asserted, vol. I. The same subject is also treated in several parts of the View of the Deistical writers. And an abstract of the whole may be seen in the Summary of the Evidences for Christianity, at the latter end of that work.



THE  
ADVANTAGE AND NECESSITY  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN REVELATION,  
SHOWN FROM THE  
STATE OF RELIGION IN THE HEATHEN WORLD.

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PART I.

RELATING TO THE KNOWLEDGE AND WORSHIP OF THE ONE  
TRUE GOD.

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CHAP. I.

*Man, in his original constitution and the design of his Creator, a religious creature. Not left at his first formation to work out a scheme of religion for himself. It is reasonable to suppose, and confirmed by the most ancient accounts, that the knowledge of religion was communicated to the first parents of the human race by a revelation from God: and from them derived to their descendants. God made farther discoveries of his will to Noah, the second father of mankind. Tradition the chief way of conveying the knowledge of religion in those early ages.*

THAT man is a religious creature, that is, capable of religion, and designed for it, is apparent to any one who makes due reflections upon the frame of the human nature.\* By religion, I understand the duty which reasonable creatures

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\* When we say a man is a religious creature, we do not mean that every man is born with an actual knowledge of religion and its main principles, which is contrary to evident fact and experience; but with faculties capable of attaining to it by reflection and proper instruction.

owe to God, their Creator and Benefactor, their sovereign Lord and chiefest good. It is manifest, from observation and experience, that men have faculties capable of contemplating the great Author of their beings, and Lord of the universe, of adoring his perfections, and of acting from a regard to his authority, and in obedience to his laws. The inferior animals seem to be well fitted for the various functions and enjoyments of the sensitive life : but there is nothing in them from which we can conclude that they are capable of forming any notions of God, or of the obligations of religion. If there have been people among whom scarce any traces of religion can be found, yet still they have faculties, which, if duly improved, render them capable of being instructed in it. But who will undertake to instruct the brutes in the knowledge of God, and in the principles and precepts of religion and morality ?

This seems then to be one remarkable proof of the superior excellency of man above the other creatures in this lower world. From whence it follows, that he is designed proportionably for a more excellent end, and for a higher happiness. Since it is evident, in fact, that man is capable of rising in his thoughts, when duly instructed, above the sensible objects which are before his eyes, to the invisible Author of nature, the supreme and absolutely perfect Being, and of contemplating, loving, adoring, obeying him ; it may be justly concluded that this was the principal end for which he was designed, as being the worthiest employment of his noblest powers. And to suppose this to be a principal end of his being, and what he was originally made and designed for, and yet that he is under no obligation to answer that end, is too absurd and inconsistent to be admitted. Man indeed hath a fleshly part and animal powers, in common with the inferior creatures, by which he is fitted for relishing and enjoying sensible good, but as he hath also a mind within him, which is undoubtedly the noblest part of his constitution, his principal end and highest happiness must be judged of, from the highest and most excellent part of his nature : and in which his proper distinction

And pre-eminence above the inferior animals doth principally consist.

These several observations lead us to consider man as designed and formed for religion. If there be a relation between God and man, distinct from the relation men bear to one another, (and this is as certain as it is that God existeth, and that man is a dependent creature, and the subject of the divine government:) then there must be duties arising from the relation men bear to God, distinct from the duties they owe to their fellow-creatures. And if it is the will of God that they should act correspondently to the relations they bear to one another, we are led, by the soundest maxims of reason and good sense, to maintain that it is his will that they should act conformably to the relations they bear to him. To suppose a rational creature, a moral agent, to be obliged to have a regard to his fellow creatures, beings of the same species with himself, and to be under no obligation to have any regard to his Maker, the God and Father of all, would be a manifest irregularity and deformity in the moral system. As nothing can be more absurd and contrary to truth and reason, than to deny that there is a God; so nothing can be more unbecoming a rational creature, than to live as without God in the world, and to show no more regard to him than if there was no such Being.

Nor is it any valid objection against this, that God is infinitely happy in himself, and therefore standeth not in need of any homage or duty we can render to him, and is not capable of receiving any benefit from our services. For this would be to make the very perfection and excellency of his nature, and the greatness of his majesty and dominion, an argument for neglecting him, and showing no regard to him at all. God's being perfectly happy in himself is no reason for his not requiring of his reasonable creatures, such duties as the nature of things, and the relation between him and them, make it fit for him to require, and for them to perform. And what can be in itself more fit and reasonable, and more agreeable to the rules of order, than that reasonable beings, who



derive their existence and faculties, and all the blessings they enjoy from God, and whom he hath made capable of contemplating, serving, and adoring him, should render him that religious veneration and submission, that love and gratitude, that adoration and obedience, which is most justly due to their Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, the Parent and Lord of the universe?

To what hath been offered concerning religion in general, it may not be improper to add the suffrage of two noble writers of great abilities, and who were certainly no friends to superstition. The one is the Earl of Shaftesbury, who says, "Man is not only born to virtue, friendship, honesty, and faith, but to religion, piety, and a generous surrender of his mind to what happens from the supreme cause or order of things, which he acknowledges entirely just and perfect."\* The other is the late Lord Bolingbroke, who acknowledges that "man is a religious as well as social creature, made to know and adore his Creator, to discover and obey his will. — Greater powers of reason and means of improvement have been measured out to us than to other animals, that we might be able to fulfil the superior purposes of our destination, whereof religion is undoubtedly the chief—and that in these the elevation and pre-eminence of our species over the inferior animals consists."†

As certain therefore as it is that man had an intelligent and wise Author of his being,‡ so certainly may we conclude that he originally formed and designed him for religion. And if so, it is reasonable to think, that whenever he formed man, he

\* *Characterist.* vol. III. p. 224. edit. 5.

† *Bolingbroke's Works*, vol. V. p. 470. See also *ibid.* p. 340, 390, 391. edit. 4to.

‡ A celebrated writer hath justly observed, that there cannot be a greater absurdity than to suppose beings, who have reason and intelligence, to proceed from a blind unintelligent cause. *C'eux qui ont dit qu'une fatalité aveugle a produit tous les effets que nous voyons dans le monde, ont dit une grande absurdité. Car quelle plus grande absurdité qu'une fatalité aveugle, qui auroit produit des êtres intelligens?* *L'Espirit des Loix.* vol. I. chap. i. in the beginning.

put him at his first creation into an immediate capacity of answering this end of his being, and entering on a life of religion. Two suppositions may be here made, one of which must unavoidably be admitted. Either it must be said, that God at his first formation only gave him faculties and powers whereby he is capable of religion, but left him entirely to himself to acquire the knowledge of religion and his duty, by the mere force of his own unassisted reason and experience: or, it must be supposed, that the wise Author of his being, at his first creation, communicated to him such a knowledge of religion, as enabled him immediately to know his Maker, and the duty required of him: in which case it cannot be denied, that the first notions and discoveries of religion came to the parents of the human race by immediate revelation from God himself.

The former of these suppositions appears to me very improbable, and not consistent with the best ideas we can form of the wisdom and goodness of God, and the care he must be supposed to exercise towards man at his first creation. It is most reasonable to suppose, that the first man (and the argument will equally hold, whether we suppose one or more men to have been originally created) was formed in an adult state: for to have brought him into the world in a state of infancy, and left him to himself without any one to take care of him, or any parents to nourish and support him, would have been to expose him destitute and helpless to certain misery and death. And if he was first formed in an adult state, it is not reasonable to think that so noble a creature, endued by his Maker with such excellent faculties, capable, if duly instructed, of attaining to a high degree of knowledge, should be thrust out into the world, like a huge overgrown infant, perfect indeed in his bodily form and constitution, but with a mind utterly unfurnished; having sensible ideas and appetites to fit him for a brutal life, like the inferior animals, but destitute of that knowledge and those ideas, which were necessary to enable him to answer the higher purposes of his destination. And what made his case more particular and different from

that of those who were afterwards born into the world, he had no human parents, nor instructors of his own species, which is the ordinary way by which men, in the present state, receive the first rudiments of knowledge.

If it be said he might soon, by the force of his own reason, and the exercise of his intellectual faculties, acquire a sufficient knowledge of God, and of his duty, and consequently of true religion, as far as it was necessary for him to know it: I answer, that though the main principles of all religion, especially those relating to the existence, the unity, the perfections, and providence of God, when once clearly proposed to the human mind, with their proper proofs and evidences, and thoroughly examined and enquired into, are perfectly agreeable to the most improved reason and understanding of man, yet it can hardly be supposed, that the first man or men, if left to themselves without any instruction or information, would have been able to have formed, in a short time, a right scheme of religion for themselves, founded upon those principles. The arguing the being, the unity, and attributes of God from the works of nature, and the harmony and order of the universe, by a chain of reasonings and deductions, seems to be a task not very fit for the first of men, when rude and uncultivated. It is an observation of the Baron de Montesquieu, that "the law which imprinted the idea of a Creator, and prescribes our duty to him, is the first of natural laws in dignity and importance, but not in the order of laws.—" It is clear, that, in the state of nature, man's first ideas would not be of a speculative kind: he would first think how to preserve his own being, before he searched into the original of his being." I think this must be allowed, supposing man, at his first formation, to have been left merely to himself without instruction. It would probably have been a long time before he raised his thoughts to things spiritual and invisible, and attained to such a knowledge and contemplation of the works of nature, as to have inferred from thence the necessary existence of the one only true God, and his infinite perfections. So that to have left him to himself, in the circumstances

he was then in, to find out all truths moral and divine, which it concerned him to know, merely by his own reason, without farther instruction, would have been to have left him for a long time after his first formation without the knowledge of God and divine things, without religion, and consequently incapable of living up to the highest end of his being. Supposing the first man or men to have been mere savages, it might have been ages before they came to a right knowledge of religion, or to form just ideas concerning it. Or, if man at his first creation be supposed to have had an excellent understanding and powers of reason, yet if his mind at his first formation had been without any ideas but what he gradually acquired, he must have been a long time before he attained to the knowledge of divine and invisible things, or could form a language capable of expressing and communicating those ideas.\*

Though I am far from approving the account given by Mr. Hume of the original of religion, yet I cannot help thinking there is a great deal of force in what that ingenious writer says, to show that the first men in the earliest ages did not come to the knowledge of the existence and perfections of God by rational disquisitions and deductions from the works of nature. He observes that, "if men had been left to themselves, and the natural progress of the human mind, they could not at first stretch their conceptions to that perfect Being, who bestowed order on the whole frame of nature. The mind rises gradually from the inferior to the superior —as nothing could disturb the natural progress of thought, but some obvious and invincible argument, which might immediately lead the mind into the pure principles of Theism, and make it overleap, at one bound, the vast interval which is interposed between the human and divine nature. I allow," continues he, "that the order and frame of the uni-

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\* If we suppose man to have been created at first with innate ideas of God and religion, this is, in effect, to acknowledge that God revealed them to him, and that from him his knowledge of religion was derived.

“verse, when accurately examined, affords such an argument; yet I can never think that this consideration could have any influence on mankind, when they formed their first notions of religion.—A necessitous animal, pressed with numerous wants and passions, has no leisure to admire the regular face of nature, and to make inquiries into the causes of the course of things.”\*

Particularly with regard to that great principle of true religion, the unity of God, or that there is one only God and Father of all, this is not so easily demonstrable, as necessarily to engage the assent of the first men, untutored in learning and philosophy. That the works of nature, which we behold, owed their original to wisdom and contrivance, and to some intelligent cause or causes, and were not the mere effects of chance, or a blind unintelligent nature, may seem clear, when duly proposed, to a common sound understanding: but whether there might not be more causes and authors of the several parts of the universe than one, to the mere natural reason of men, who have made no great progress in metaphysical inquiries, is not so evident. Mr. Hume indeed urges, that “were men led into the apprehensions of invisible intelligent power, by a contemplation of the works of nature, they could never possibly entertain any conceptions, but of one simple Being, who bestowed existence and order on this vast machine, and adjusted all its parts according to one regular plan, or connected system.” But, upon this supposition, the person who forms this conclusion must be able to regard this vast universe as a well connected system, one stupendous machine, all the parts of which are admirably adjusted to one another, so as to constitute one regular orderly harmonious whole. And this is a point which requires much more knowledge, more extensive disquisitions and views, than generally fall to

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\* Hume's Dissertation on the Natural History of Religion, p. 5, 6; yet he owns that, “when the contemplation is so far enlarged, as to contemplate the first rise of this visible system, we must adopt with the strongest conviction the idea of some intelligent cause or author.” Ibid. p. 112.

the share of the bulk of mankind, or than those have leisure or capacity to attend to, who are not accustomed to abstracted metaphysical speculations. If men were left merely to themselves without any other guide, they might be apt to imagine a multiplicity of causes and authors; and that the most conspicuous parts of the universe, which they might suppose to be distinct worlds, had different authors and architects. Lord Bolingbroke observes that, "though the first men could doubt no more that there is some cause of the world, than that the world itself existed, yet, in consequence of this great event, and of the surprize, ignorance, and inexperience of mankind, there must have been much doubt and uncertainty concerning the first cause—the variety of phenomena which struck their senses would lead them to imagine a variety of causes."\*

It is probable, from what has been said, that the first men did not acquire the knowledge of God and religion by the mere force of their own reason. And since it may be justly laid down as a principle, that man was originally formed and brought into the world by a wise and good as well as all-powerful Author, it is congruous to suppose, that he made discoveries of himself and of his will to his yet innocent creature; and furnished him immediately with ideas of the things which it most nearly concerned him to know; especially of those things, which lie at the foundation of all religion, and without some notion of which he could not be in a proper capacity to answer the chief end of his being. Such are the important truths relating to the existence and attributes of God, the creation of the world, his governing providence, his being a rewarder of those that faithfully serve and obey him, and a punisher of evil doers; which supposes his having given a law to mankind for the rule of their obedience. And indeed this necessarily follows from God's having made man a moral

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\* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. III. p. 253, 259, 260. edit. 4to. And he expresses himself to the same purpose, vol. IV. p. 21.

agent, capable of being governed by laws. And as a law is not obligatory, unless promulgated, and made known, it is reasonable to believe, that when God first placed man in the world, he made a plain declaration of the duty required of him, and did not leave him, at his first coming into the world, to collect his duty merely in a way of reasoning from the nature, and fitness, and relations of things. This was a work for which, through want of knowledge, observation, and experience, he could not be supposed to be well qualified, except God should extraordinarily interpose for his instruction.

This, which in speculation is a most reasonable hypothesis, appears, from the account given by Moses, to have been true in fact. His history, abstracting from his authority as an inspired writer, of which yet we have sufficient proof, contains the best and most authentic relation of the first age of the world which is any where to be met with. The account he gives of the origin of the human race from a first pair, one man and one woman, both of them created by God in an adult state, endued with knowledge and language, immediately capable of conversing with their Maker and with one another, is worthy of God, and honourable to mankind. It is infinitely superior to the mean and senseless accounts of the origination of mankind given by the ancient Egyptians, according to Diodorus, and afterwards by the Epicureans, and others who call themselves philosophers. The history Moses gives us of the first ages of the world before the flood, is very short: but it sufficiently appears from it, that the first parents of the human race were brought into the world, not in a helpless infant state, but in a state of maturity, placed in a happy situation, and in advantageous circumstances for preserving their purity and innocence: and that to supply their want of observation and experience, God was pleased, in his great goodness, to favour them with extraordinary notices and significations of his will and of their duty. Some few particulars are mentioned, which show that God made discoveries of himself to our first parents, and gave them laws. Of this kind was God's blessing and sanctifying the Sabbath day. This

supposes that he communicated to our first parents the knowledge of the creation of the world, of which this was designed to be a solemn memorial: that the heavens and heavenly bodies, the earth and all things that are therein, and particularly their own bodies and souls, as well as all other animals, were the productions of his power, wisdom, and goodness. A most important point of knowledge this! And which included in it the belief and acknowledgement of the existence, the perfections, and attributes of the one true God, the supreme and absolutely perfect Being. Moses also gives an account of the early institution of marriage, and law concerning it, which, though represented as spoken by Adam, yet, considering how soon this happened after the creation, and how little knowledge he could then have attained to by his own experience, must have been divinely revealed to him: especially since it contained directions in this matter, which were to be a rule to future ages. He also informs us, that there was a particular law given to our first parents concerning their not eating the forbidden fruit, which, whatever objections some have made against it, was very properly suited to the condition and circumstances in which they were then constituted.\* He ac-

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\* I have elsewhere vindicated the Mosaic account of man's original dignity and of his fall, against the objections advanced by Dr. Tindal and others. Answer to Christianity as Old as the Creation, vol. II. cap. xv. And as to the particular injunction which Moses tells us was laid upon our first parents by way of trial of their obedience, it is no hard matter to show, that it had nothing in it unbecoming the supreme wisdom and goodness. For since God was pleased to constitute man lord of this inferior creation, and had given him so large a grant, and so many advantages, it was manifestly proper that he should require some particular instance of homage and fealty, to be a memorial to man of his dependence, and an acknowledgement on his part that he was under the dominion of a higher Lord, to whom he owed the most absolute subjection and obedience. And what properer instance of homage could there be in the circumstances man was then in, than his being obliged, in obedience to the divine command, to abstain from one or more of the delicious fruits of paradise? It pleased God to insist only upon his abstaining from one, at the same time that he indulged him in a full liberty as to all the rest. And this served both as an act of homage to the supreme Lord, from whose bountiful grant he held paradise and all its enjoyments, and was also fitted to teach our first parents a noble and useful lesson of abstinence



quaints us with the declaration and effects of the divine displeasure against them for their disobedience, and the original promise made to them to keep them from sinking under despondency: the true meaning and design of which was no doubt more distinctly explained to our first parents, than is mentioned in that short account. By it God gave them to understand that, though they had suffered themselves to be drawn into sin and disobedience by the tempter, he would, in his great goodness, provide a glorious deliverer, who was to proceed from the woman, to break the power of the enemy that had tempted them, and to rescue them from the miseries and ruins they had brought upon themselves by their apostacy. And it may be reasonably supposed, that they had hopes given them, that though they and their posterity were still to be subject to many evils and to temporal death, as the effects and punishments of sin, yet upon their repentance and sincere obedience, they were to be raised to a better life. And accordingly the hope of pardoning mercy, and the expectation of a future state, seem to have obtained from the beginning, and to have spread generally among mankind in the earliest ages, by a most ancient tradition, as I shall have occasion to show afterwards. And this is best accounted for by supposing it to have been part of the primitive religion, derived from the first parents of the human race, who had it by immediate revelation from God himself.

That there was an intercourse between God and man in the first ages, and that he then communicated to men the disco-

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and self-denial, one of the most necessary lessons in a state of probation; and also of unreserved submission to God's authority and will, and an implicit resignation to the supreme wisdom and goodness. It tended to habituate them to keep their sensitive appetite in a due subjection to the law of reason; to take them off from a too close attachment to inferior sensible good, and to engage them to place their highest happiness in God alone: and finally, to keep their desire after knowledge within just bounds, so as to be content with knowing what was really proper and useful for them to know, and not presume to pry with an unwarrantable curiosity into things which did not belong to them, and which God had not thought fit to reveal. See the View of the Deistical Writers, vol. II. p. 144, 145, 3d. edit.

veries of his will, farther appears from what is related concerning Cain and Abel: as also from the high encomium given of Enoch, that he walked with God, and the distinguishing reward conferred upon him for his piety, which exhibited a sensible proof of a future state.

As there is great reason to think that God communicated the knowledge of the fundamental principles of religion and moral obligations to the first parents of the human race; so if this were the case, it is rational to conclude that they must have been led, both by a sense of duty and by inclination, to communicate that knowledge to their posterity. For it appears from the original constitution of the human nature, and was probably enforced by an express divine command, that the Author of our beings designed, that parents should endeavour to instruct their children; this being the ordinary inlet to the first rudiments of knowledge, especially with respect to the main principles of religion, and the duties of morality. And the first of the human race, who came immediately out of the hands of God, must have had an authority this way, which none of those of succeeding generations, in the ordinary course of things, could have. The world was just made, the creation fresh in memory, and the communications of God to men frequent and sensible. Nor could their children have the least just grounds to suspect the veracity of their information, or that they had any intention to impose upon them. They needed none of those credentials, which were afterwards necessary, when there had been false pretences to revelation in opposition to the true. They delivered what they themselves knew to be true, and what they had received from God; and it must have come from them with a peculiar weight, and ought to have been received with great veneration and an entire credit. And the long lives of the first man and his immediate descendants \* gave them a singular advantage for

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\* Josephus speaking of the long lives of men in the first ages, as recorded by Moses, concludes with saying—"I have for witness all those that have written antiquities both among Greeks and Barbarians." He particularly mentions

preserving and propagating those traditions. It is easy to conceive, that they might, without much difficulty, be transmitted to Noah the second father of mankind. Methuselah was cotemporary with Adam about 245 years, and with Noah 600 years. And as Noah himself was a man of eminent piety and virtue, and lived 600 years with those of the old world, he would, no doubt, be particularly careful to get a true information of the original principles of religion delivered to the first parents of mankind. We may, therefore, reasonably conclude, that he retained whatsoever there was of chief importance in the ancient primitive religion. And it is also agreeable to the divine wisdom and goodness, as well as to the accounts given us by Moses, to suppose, that God, who in so extraordinary a manner distinguished him, and saved him from the universal deluge, made farther discoveries of himself and of his will to Noah, to be by him communicated to his descendants. And this may be justly regarded as a second promulgation of religion in its main principles to the whole human race. The deluge itself, the memory of which could not be soon forgotten,\* must have had a great influence

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Manetho and Berosus, Moschus, Hestizus, Hieronymus the Egyptian, those who composed the Phœnician history, Hesiod also, and Hecataeus, and Hellanicus and Acsilaus. And besides these, Ephorus and Nicolaus relate that the ancients lived a thousand years. Joseph. *Archæolog.* l. i. cap. 3. Mr. Whiston, in a note upon this passage in his English translation of Josephus observes, that he might have added Varro, who made that inquiry, what the reason was that the ancients are supposed to have lived a thousand years.

\* There is no one fact, considering its great antiquity, which comes to us better attested than the universal deluge. Josephus quotes Berosus the Chaldean, Hieronymus the Egyptian, who wrote the Phœnician antiquities, Nicolaus of Damascus, and Mnaseas: and adds that a great many more make mention of the same. Joseph. *ubi supra*. The tradition of it hath spread through the world, and is preserved in the memory of all nations: in the continent of America as well as Asia, in the East and West Indies, among the Africans and Europeans. See Burnetti *Telluris Theor. Sacra*, l. i. cap. 3. See also Testimonies to this purpose collected by Grotius *De Verit. Relig. Christ.* l. i. sect. 16. and by the learned author of *Revelation Examined with Candour*, Part I. Dissert. 13, 14. And indeed there are many things in the present constitution of the earth, which show that such a flood there hath been, and that the whole earth was covered with it.

to impress men's minds with a sense of religion and its obligations. It must have strengthened their faith in God, who made the earth at first, and placed man upon it, and who by this stupendous event showed that he had power, if he pleased, to destroy it. It gave men a sensible proof that he is the Lord of nature, and hath a sovereign dominion over it, and over all the elements; that his providence concerneth itself with men and their actions; that he is a hater of vice and wickedness, and a punisher of evil doers, and is a lover and rewarder of righteousness, and delivereth those from the greatest evils, that love and serve him in sincerity. It cannot be reasonably doubted, that Noah, both when he was in the ark, where he had leisure and opportunity, and after he came out of it, took care to instruct his children and descendants in those heads of religion which he himself had received; particularly those relating to the knowledge and worship of the one true God, the creation of the world, the providence of God as a rewarder and punisher, the laws he hath given to mankind, and a future state: some notions of which were, by tradition, generally spread among the nations.

The ages immediately following the flood cannot be supposed to have been ages of learning and philosophy. It is well observed by a learned writer, that "the manner of life men led in the ages next following the dispersion, and the pressing necessities they were under, occasioned their making a very slow progress in the sciences."\* As the wide earth was before them, it may naturally be supposed that many of them would wander about seeking proper habitations; some of whom would remove to countries far distant from their first settlement, and fall by degrees into a rude and savage kind of life. They had little leisure or inclination for sublime speculations. The arts and sciences known before the flood were generally lost with the inventors of them, and those that exercised them; yet still some remains of religion, some notions of a Deity, of a providence, of a future state, and of the

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\* *De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des Sciences*, tom. i. p. 396, 397.  
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moral differences of things, were generally preserved, even in those parts which became wild and savage. It cannot well be supposed that, in their circumstances, they attained to a notion of these things in a way of reasoning and argument. And therefore it can be attributed to nothing so probably as the remains of an ancient universal tradition derived from the first ancestors of the human race: and which the heads of families that proceeded from Noah, and who had received those principles from him, carried into the several regions of their dispersion.

Here it may be proper to take notice of a remarkable passage of Plato in the beginning of his third book of laws. He speaks of a destruction which happened to men by a flood, and from which very few escaped; who were shepherds, and abode on the tops of mountains, and became the seed of a new generation. He says that cities, civil polities, and governments, together with the knowledge of arts, having been lost and perished in the confusion, the succeeding generations of men were for a long time ignorant: that they followed the customs and manners of their ancestors, especially in what related to religion and the gods; and that they gradually formed themselves into societies, and had the most ancient men among them, and the heads of their families, for their leaders and governors.

I think there are here manifest traces of the universal deluge. The account he gives of it cannot well be applied to a particular inundation, confined to Attica, Thessaly, or Greece, as were those of Deucalion or Ogyges; though the Greeks after their manner blended and confounded them with the traditions they had received concerning the Noachic deluge. Plato speaks of a flood which extended to the greatest part of mankind. And he supposes, that those who remained after the deluge still retained something of the customs and religion of their fathers, which they transmitted to their posterity. He intimates that there were traditions of this in his time, and introduces the account with this question, "Do the ancient traditions seem to you to have any truth in them?" To

which he answers in the affirmative. But in this, as well as other instances, the primitive traditions were very much altered and corrupted among the Greeks, and were kept more pure and distinct in some other nations: of which the testimonies of Berosus in his Chaldean antiquities, and of Lucian in his treatise, *De Dea Syria*, are remarkable instances; whose traditionary accounts concerning the flood are in several respects agreeable to that which is given by Moses.

It may reasonably be supposed, that in those parts of the world which were first peopled after the flood, and which were nearest the place where the first restorers of the human race chose to reside, what remained of arts or knowledge, after the universal shipwreck, were chiefly to be found. There also it might be expected that the greatest vestiges of the ancient religion might be traced, as being nearest the fountain head. And they that were afterwards scattered to distant parts would be apt sooner to lapse into ignorance and barbarism. The best remains of ancient history agree in this with the Mosaical accounts; that in the eastern parts of the world, that is, where Noah and his family first settled after the flood, societies and civil polities were first formed, cities built, and arts cultivated. The East was the source of knowledge, from whence it was communicated to the western parts of the world. There the most precious remains of ancient tradition were to be found. Thither the most celebrated Greek philosophers afterwards travelled in quest of science, or the knowledge of things divine and human. And thither the law-givers had recourse, in order to their being instructed in laws and civil polity.

It is a thing well known, that the wisdom of the East consisted much in teaching and delivering ancient traditions. Diodorus Siculus has a remarkable passage concerning the different ways of philosophizing among the Chaldeans (and it holdeth equally of other eastern nations) and the Greeks. He observes that the former did not give a loose to their invention, as the Greeks did; but were for adhering to the tenets derived by tradition from their ancient wise men. And in-

deed this was the oldest way of philosophizing among the Greeks themselves. The learned Dr. Thomas Burnet has observed, that the traditionary philosophy, which did not depend upon reasoning and the investigation of causes, but upon the primitive doctrine delivered by tradition from their fathers, seems to have continued among the Greeks, lower than the times of the Trojan war. "*Durâsse mihi videtur ultra Trojana tempora philosophia traditiva, quæ ratiociniis, et causarum explicatione non nitebatur, sed alterius generis et originis, doctrinâ primigeniâ et παρρηγορεύουσα.*" Archæol. Philos. l. i. cap. 6. The same learned author, in the 14th chapter of that book which treats De Origine Philosophiæ Barbaricæ, speaking of the ancient sages and philosophers among the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Phœnicians, Ethiopians, Arabians, Indians, says, "they never showed an inventive genius, so as to make it probable that they owed the things they taught to the force of their own reason." It was not the manner of the ancients to form systems and theories, and to demonstrate their doctrine by causes and effects. They delivered their tenets simply, not in a way of argumentation, but as what ought to be received by the learners or hearers upon the authority of the wise men, without doubting or disputing. He instances in the doctrine of the formation of the world out of a chaos, and the conflagration or destruction of the world by fire, both which spread generally among the ancients, but without assigning any reasons to confirm them.\* He thinks, therefore,

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\* I shall afterwards take notice of the tradition about the origin of the earth from a chaos. As to the conflagration of the world, it was a doctrine of the highest antiquity. It was constantly maintained by the Stoics, but they were not the authors of it. It was taught before them by Heraclitus, Empedocles, and others. And it probably came to the Greeks from the Egyptians and Phœnicians. Zeno himself, the father of the Stoics, was of Phœnician origin. The Egyptians, as Plato informs us, held successive destructions of the world by deluges and conflagrations. Thus they joined the traditions of the first destruction of the world by water, and the last which shall be by fire, together, mixing the traditions, and supposing those destructions to return at certain periods. The poets have likewise preserved the ancient tradition of the conflagration of the world, as might be shown from Sophocles, Lucretius, Ovid, Lucan, &c. The Brahmins also in India have

that these and other things which were generally received, were probably owing to an ancient tradition derived from Noah: or they might be a part of the traditions derived to Noah from the antediluvian patriarchs, and which were originally communicated, by divine revelation, to the first father of mankind.

The latter Greeks, who had a high opinion of their own wisdom, were loath to own, that they derived any part of their knowledge from the Barbarians, as they called all other nations but themselves. Diogenes Laërtius blames those who presumed to say, that philosophy had its rise among the barbarians, and affirms, that they ignorantly applied to the barbarians what the Greeks themselves had rightly done and invented. His prejudice in favour of the Greeks carries him so far as to say, that from them not only philosophy, but the human race, had its original. Laërt. in *Procem. Segm. 3.* And yet it is a thing certain, and universally acknowledged, and which appears from his own accounts, that the most celebrated among the ancient philosophers travelled into the eastern countries, Chaldea, Phœnicia, Egypt, Persia, and some of them as far as India, to converse with the wise men of those nations for their improvement in knowledge. A long catalogue is given by Diodorus Siculus of those of them that travelled into Egypt, who had it from the Egyptian priests. Plato, in his *Epinomis*, acknowledges that the Greeks learned many things from the barbarians, though he asserts that they improved what they thus borrowed, and made it better, especially in what related to the worship of the gods.\* That

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held, from the most ancient times, and still hold, that the world shall be destroyed by fire. See Burnet's *Telluris Theor. Sacr.* l. iii. cap. 2. and his *Archæol.* l. ii. Appendix. This tradition, like many others, was altered and corrupted, especially by those who, like the Stoics, supposed periodical conflagrations and renovations of the world; and some of them carried it so far as to maintain, that after such conflagrations, the whole series both of persons and things should be restored exactly in the same condition it was in before, and the same actions done over again. *Orig. cont. Cels.* l. v. p. 245.

\* *Plat. Oper.* p. 703. Edit. Ficin. Lugd. 1590.



great philosopher himself spent several years in Egypt among the Egyptian priests, as Pythagoras, of whom he was a great admirer, had done before. And it has been often observed, that there are many things in his writings which he learned in the East ; and that from thence he seems to have borrowed some of his sublimest notions, though he probably embellished, and added to them by the force of his own genius. There are several passages in his works, in which he represents theological truths, as having been derived, not merely from the reasonings of philosophers, but from ancient and venerable traditions, which were looked upon as of divine original, though he sometimes intimates that they were mixed with fables. Eusebius, and others of the fathers contend, that all the knowledge of divine things among the Greeks came originally from the Hebrews. But this seems to be carrying it too far. Some of those things may well be supposed to have been the remains of ancient tradition, derived not merely from the Hebrews, or the Mosaic and prophetic writings, but from the patriarchal ages ; some vestiges of which continued, for a long time, especially among the eastern nations.

The several considerations which have been mentioned, make it highly probable that religion first entered into the world by divine revelation : that it was not merely the result of men's own unassisted reason, or the effect of learning and philosophy, which had made little progress in those early ages : but owed its original to a revelation communicated from God to the first parents of the human race. From them it was delivered down by tradition to their descendants : though, in process of time, it became greatly obscured, and corrupted with impure mixtures.

## CHAP. II.

*The first religion of mankind was not idolatry, but the knowledge and worship of the one true God. Some vestiges of which may be traced up to the most ancient times. A tradition of the creation of the world continued long among the nations. The notion of one supreme God was never entirely extinguished in the Pagan world; but his true worship was in a great measure lost and confounded amidst a multiplicity of idol deities.*

FROM the account which hath been given in the preceding chapter, it may be fairly concluded, that not idolatry, but the worship of the one true God, was the first religion of mankind. But this deserves to be more distinctly considered, as it is what some are not willing to allow. Mr. Hume, in his *Dissertation on the Natural History of Religion*, having endeavoured to show that the first men were not qualified to find out the existence and perfections of God, the sole Creator of the universe, by reasoning from the works of nature, draws this conclusion from it, that Theism was not the first religion of the human race. "If," says he, "we consider the improvements of human society, from rude beginnings to a state of greater perfection, polytheism and idolatry was, and necessarily must have been, the first and most ancient religion of mankind." p. 4. And again he pronounces it "impossible that Theism could, from reasoning, have been the primary religion of the human race."\* *Ibid.* p. 9. But his argument does not prove that Theism, or the acknowledgment and worship of one God, was not the religion of the first ages; it only shows that it was not the mere result of their own reasonings: and therefore if it obtained among them, it must have been owing to a divine revelation originally communicated to the first men. And this was the case in fact. He supposes, in the passage above quoted from him, to which others might be added, that it was impossible that men, in the

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\* Lord Bolingbroke is of the same opinion. See his *Works*, vol. III. p. 256, 260.

first ages of the world, should, if left to themselves in the circumstances they were in, have any other religion than idolatry; and he asserts, that they were left to themselves accordingly, and therefore were necessarily idolaters. But I can hardly conceive a greater absurdity, than to imagine that a wise and good God, the parent of mankind, should place them in such circumstances at their first formation, and for many ages afterwards, that they must unavoidably either have no religion at all, or a false one; so that it was absolutely impossible for them not to be idolaters and polytheists. This seems to me to cast the most unworthy reflections on divine providence. It is far more rational to suppose that, through the divine goodness, the first parents and ancestors of the human race had a knowledge of religion in its main fundamental principles, communicated to them from God himself, at their first coming into the world, to put them into an immediate capacity of knowing and adoring their Maker. For in this case, if they, or their descendants afterwards, fell into polytheism and idolatry, it was their own fault; wholly owing to themselves, and not chargeable on divine providence; since there was an original revelation granted them, which they had it in their power, and were under the strongest obligations to transmit pure to their posterity.\* But the supposing mankind at their first

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\* The account which Mr. Hume himself gives of the origin of religion among mankind is very extraordinary. He acknowledgeth that "there is a consent of mankind, almost universal, in the belief that there is an invisible intelligent power in the world." But he gives no sufficient account, how there came to be such a general consent of mankind in this belief. He never takes the least notice of a divine revelation as having given rise to it: nor will he allow that the first ideas of religion arose from the contemplation of the works of nature, for which he thinks the first men, in the circumstances they were in, were by no means qualified. Whence then doth he suppose the first notions of religion to have proceeded? It is "from men's examining into the various and contrary events of human life, and in this disorderly scene, with eyes still more disordered and astonished, they see the first obscure traces of divinity." *Dissert. on the Nat. Hist. of Religion*, p. 13, 14, 15. A goodly account this of the first original of the idea of God and religion among mankind! It is true, that when men have once formed a notion of invisible intelligent powers, they might be apt to attribute to

formation to have been constituted in such circumstances, that it was impossible for them to know and worship the one true God, the Maker and Lord of the universe: that is, to fulfil the principal end of their being; and that idolatry and polytheism was the necessary result of the state they were at first placed and long continued in; this is laying the blame of their false religion and polytheism, not upon themselves, but upon God, and making him the proper author of it. The hypothesis, therefore, that polytheism and idolatry was not the first original religion of mankind, but only the corruption of it, is far more agreeable to reason, and more consistent with the best notions we can form of the wisdom and goodness of divine Providence.

And this, which is most agreeable to reason, is also most conformable to the best accounts which are given us of the ancient state of mankind. Mr. Hume, indeed, appeals to fact, that "all mankind, a very few excepted, were idolaters from the beginning, and continued so till 1700 years ago; and that the farther we mount up into antiquity, the more we find mankind plunged into idolatry: no marks or symptoms of a more perfect religion." But if by idolatry he means, which seems to be what he intends by it, that mankind, from the beginning of the world, were absolutely without any knowledge or notion of the one supreme God, his assertion is not true.

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such powers, those events which they could not otherwise account for. But the mere consideration of the fortuitous accidents, as he calls them, of human life, and which they might be apt to attribute to chance, could not give them the first notion of superior invisible power; nor doth it at all account for this notion's having been almost universal among mankind, as he owns it to have been. According to his scheme, *Elves* and *Fairies*, to which he compareth the heathen deities, must have been the first gods of the human race. Whereas it appeareth from the best accounts of the most ancient times, that the worship of the one true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, was the first religion of mankind, and that the first idolatry, or deviation from the primitive religion, was the worship of heaven and the heavenly bodies; to which they were led by their admiration of them, and by considering their splendour, and influence on this lower world. Mr. Hume's account of the origin of religion among mankind is founded in his own imagination, without any authority or reason to support it.

A notion of a supreme Deity continued for a long time among the idolatrous heathens themselves, and never was entirely extinguished, though greatly obscured and corrupted. And the same may be observed concerning many of those whom Mr. Hume calls the savage tribes of America: and indeed idolatry, in its first beginning, was not an utter casting off the knowledge and worship of the one true God, but the worshipping him in a superstitious manner, and the joining with him, under various pretences, other objects of worship, to whom at first they rendered an inferior degree of religious respect, but at length came to render them that divine adoration which was only due to the Supreme.

The most authentic history of the first ages of the world, as hath been already hinted, is that of Moses, who is the most ancient historian, and the most to be depended upon of any now extant. For as to the extravagant antiquities of the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, and Chinese, the fabulousness and absurdity of them has been often sufficiently exposed, and has been so very lately, by the learned and ingenious Mr. Goguet, in his 3d Dissertation at the end of his 3d tome, *De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des Sciences*. And from the account given by Moses it appeareth, that the worship of the one true God was the religion of the first ancestors of the human race, and that idolatry and polytheism came in afterwards. And the farther the nations were removed from the earliest ages, the more they degenerated from the primitive religion; and the ancient and original traditions became more and more corrupted.

The nations which made the greatest figure in the most ancient times were the Assyrians and Chaldeans, the Persians, Phœnicians, Arabians, and Egyptians; and there is great reason to think, that among all or most of these the worship of the one true God was preserved for some ages after the flood.\* To these might be added the ancient Chinese, ac-

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\* See Shuckford's *Connect. of Sacred and Profane History*, vol. i. p. 282, &c. 303. et seq.

according to the accounts given of them by F. Matthew Riccius, and others, and especially by F. Le Compte, in his *Memoirs of China*. This last mentioned author affirms, that the people of China preserved the knowledge and worship of the one true God; the Lord of heaven and earth, and the purity of religion among them, for two thousand years. And it must be owned, that there are some passages in the most ancient Chinese books, which, taken in the most obvious sense, seem to favour this hypothesis. But as this is contradicted by the Chinese themselves, who give a different account of the true sense of those books, as well as by some learned Christians well versed in the Chinese language and literature,\* I shall not lay any great stress upon it. As to the ancient Persians, they seem to have been adorers of the one true God in the earliest times. Dr. Hyde thinks they learned this from Noah, and their great progenitors, Shem and Elam: and that though they afterwards fell into Sabiism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies, yet they still retained the knowledge and worship of the supreme Deity, and that religion, in several

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\* The propositions in Le Compte's *Memoirs* relating to the ancient religion of the Chinese, were censured by the Superiors of the Seminary of Foreign Missions at Paris, and afterwards by the Faculty of Divinity there, in their decisions of Oct. 18th, 1700. Some of the Jesuits themselves have also given different accounts of the ancient religion of China; particularly F. Nicholas Longobardi, who lived many years in China, and was well acquainted with their books and learning. The reader may consult his treatise on this subject, which takes up the whole fifth book of F. Navarette's *Account of the Empire of China*. See also Millar's *History of the Propag. of Christ*. vol. ii. p. 281, 282, edit. 3d. As to my own sentiments in this matter, it seems to me not improbable, that the Chinese, as well as the Persians, and some other eastern nations, had some knowledge of the one true God among them in the most ancient times; especially as their first rulers and law-givers seem to have been among the earliest descendants of Noah. But there is reason to think that their religion soon began to be corrupted, and that they early fell into the worship of the heaven, the earth, the elements, the mountains, rivers, and other parts of nature; to which, at least considered as animated by the spirits they supposed to be intimately united to them and inseparable from them, they offered sacrifices, from a very remote antiquity. This, I think, may be fairly gathered from the acknowledgments of some of those who are willing to give the most favourable accounts of them. See the *Scientia Sinensis Latine exposita*, published by four Jesuits, lib. ii. p. 51. Paris, 1687.

respects, was less corrupted among them than among many other of the Gentile nations.\* The Chaldeans and Assyrians seem to have been among the first corrupters of the true ancient religion. It is intimated, Josh. xxiv. 3. that Terah, Abraham's father, and even Abraham himself, had been infected with their idolatries. "Thus saith the Lord God, "your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood," that is, of the river Euphrates, "in old time: Terah, the father of "Abraham, and the father of Nachor, and they" (by whom we are probably to understand Terah, Abraham, and Nachor) "served other gods." It can scarce be supposed, that they were so far corrupted, as entirely to lay aside the knowledge and adoration of the one supreme God. But they paid also an inferior kind of worship to other deities; from which, however, they afterwards reformed, and, according to a tradition still current among the eastern nations, Abraham endeavoured to promote a reformation among the Chaldeans. But, if what is said of this matter in the book of Judith can be depended on, the Chaldeans cast them out; so that they were obliged to flee into Mesopotamia, where they sojourned many days.† From thence, after Terah's death, Abraham, by divine commandment, removed into Canaan. But still some of his brother Nachor's family remained in Mesopotamia. And near two hundred years after this, by the account which is given us of Laban and his family, it appears, that the knowledge and worship of the one true God was still retained in those parts, though mixed with some superstitious and idola-

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\* There is a noble passage concerning God produced by Eusebius, *Præp. Evangel.* lib. i. cap. 10. p. 42. A. from a book ascribed to Zoroaster. If this passage be genuine, and that this Zoroaster was of so great antiquity as some suppose him to have been, he lived early in the patriarchal times, and may be supposed to have preserved considerable remains of the ancient primitive religion, as being not far from the fountain head. Or, if he was as late as the reign of Darius Hystaspes, where Dr. Hyde, after the Persian and Arabian historians, places him, he derived his notions of God, as well as some other parts of his religion, from the Mosaic and prophetic writings, as that very learned writer has shown.

† Judith, chap. v. ver. 6, 7, 8.

trous usages. As to the Phœnicians and Canaanites, it must be acknowledged, that they were over-run with idolatry and polytheism in the days of Moses: but 400 years before, when Abraham sojourned among them, no traces of idolatry are to be found in the account given of them in the Mosaic history. The contrary rather appeareth from what is said of Melchisedec, a king in that country, who was also a priest of the Most High God, and to whom Abraham himself showed great respect, and gave the tenth part of the spoils he had taken. Abimelech, who was likewise a king in Canaan about the same time, seems to have had a knowledge of the true God, and to have been a worshipper of him. Nor is there the least hint of any difference between Abraham and the inhabitants of those parts, on the account of religion, or any disturbance given him on that head. He seems rather to have been regarded among them as a prophet of the Most High, and a person much in the favour of God. The same may be observed with regard to the treatment he met with from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. It does not appear, that they were as yet infected with those idolatries, for which they became afterwards so famous. And it seems by what is said of Pharaoh, that he was not absolutely a stranger to the true religion. And probably it was not entirely corrupted in the times of Joseph, as may be gathered from the particular respect he showed to their priests, and from his marrying a priest's daughter. And if what we are told of the ancient inhabitants of Thebais is to be depended upon, they seem to have preserved for a long time the primitive religion, as consisting in the worship of the one God, the Creator of the world, whom they worshipped under the name of Kneph, when the other parts of Egypt were over-run with idolatry.\* Of the ancient religion of the Arabians, the book of Job, who lived after the days of Abraham, is a noble monument. It abounds with the sublimest notions of the Divinity, and which

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\* Plut. De Isid. et Osir. oper. tom. ii. p. 359. D. Euseb. Præp. Evangel. lib. iii. cap. 11. p. 115.



are there represented as delivered down from persons of great antiquity: though it is also there intimated, that the idolatrous worship of the heavenly bodies was then beginning to be introduced in those parts.\*

I would observe, by the way, that it may be collected from the Mosaic accounts, that God was pleased to manifest himself on several occasions to particular persons, in those ancient times, as appears not only from the instances of Abraham, Isaac,† Jacob, and Joseph, but of Abimelech, Pharaoh, Laban, and others. And there are several passages in the ancient book of Job, which show that it was no unusual thing in those days for God to favour the sincere adorers of the Deity with extraordinary discoveries of his will, for their direction and guidance, and for preserving a sense and knowledge of religion among men.‡ And it may reasonably be supposed that it was so, not only in those countries where Job and his friends lived, but among other nations in those early times, where there were good and pious persons, fearers of God, and workers of righteousness. And thus probably it continued, till, by their increasing idolatries and impieties, the nations rendered themselves utterly unworthy of those divine communications, and were in God's just judgment left to walk in their own ways. It was probably some traditionary accounts of these things which gave reputation to oracles: though this, as well as other advantages they had enjoyed, was greatly abused to superstition.

The learned Dr. Shuckford observes, that there continued, for a long time among the nations, usages which show that

\* See the Antiquity of the Book of Job Vindicated, in the second Dissertation at the end of the first tome *De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, &c.*

† We are told, that Rebecca went to "inquire of the Lord" concerning the children which struggled in her womb: which seems to show that there was at that time in Canaan a prophet or prophets distinct from Abraham and Isaac, to whom persons might have recourse to know the will of God. And accordingly the answer she received contained a signal prophecy. Gen. xxv. 22, 23.

‡ Job iv. 12—20. xxxiii. 14, 15, &c.

there had been an ancient universal religion, several traces of which appeared in the rites and ceremonies which were observed in religious worship. Such was the custom of sacrifices, expiatory and precatory, both the sacrifices of animals,\* and the oblations of wine, oil, and the fruits and products of the earth; altars were erected, and pillars, such as that set up by Jacob, who poured oil upon it, and thereby consecrated it to God. These and other things which were in use among the patriarchs, obtained also among the Gentiles, and were probably intended originally to the honour of the true God, but afterwards transferred to idol deities.†

To this some learned persons have added, that the seventh day seems for a long time to have been distinguished among the nations, and to have had a peculiar sacredness ascribed to it.‡ Mr. Selden indeed has taken great pains to show that the seventh day mentioned by Pagan writers is to be understood of the seventh day of the month: and that there is no proof of the religious observance of the seventh day of the week among the ancient Gentiles. Yet it is plain from that very learned writer's own accounts, that there was a particular regard paid by them to the number seven, and that the numbering days by weeks, consisting of seven days, was of great antiquity, especially amongst the eastern nations.§ And I think a more probable account cannot be given of it, than that it was originally derived from a tradition of the history of the creation, and of a seventh day set apart, by divine ap-

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\* It appears from the instances of Cain and Abel, and afterwards of Noah, the second father of mankind, that sacrifices were made use of as a rite of religious worship from the first ages. And its having spread so universally among the nations can scarce be any other way accounted for, than by a most ancient and general tradition derived from the first of the human race. And good reasons may be offered to make it probable, that it was not their own invention, but owed its original to a divine institution.

† Shuckford's Connect. of Sacred and Profane History, vol. i. p. 301, et seq.

‡ Euseb. Præp. Evangel. lib. xiii. cap. 12 et 13.

§ Selden De Jure Nat. et Gent. lib. iii. the 17th and following chapters to the end of that book.

ment, in commemoration of it: though, like other ancient traditions, it came in process of time to be neglected, and the true original design of it lost and forgotten. It cannot be denied, however, that there remained for many ages among the nations, some remarkable vestiges of the history of the creation. It was generally believed, both that the world had a beginning, and that it was made out of a chaos or disorderly mass. This is agreeable to the account given by Moses: not that the nations generally took it from his writings, but from a tradition derived from the first ages.\* For, as Dr. Burnet observes, the remembrance of their original was still in a manner fresh in the most ancient times: "The higher one goes," says the learned Mons. Goguet, "towards the ages nearest the creation, the more we find of the visible traces of this great truth, which the invention and temerity of man in vain attempted to deface."† And that some notion of this continued for a long time among the Gentiles, might be shown from several testimonies. The learned Dr. Hyde observes, concerning the ancient Persians, that from times immemorial they had some knowledge of the history of the creation: and to this he attributes their having retained more of the knowledge of the true religion than many other nations.‡ Strabo informs us from Megasthenes, concerning the Indian Brahmins, who were remarkable for their adherence to ancient traditions which they had received from their ancestors, that they believed the world had a beginning, and shall be destroyed, and that God made and governs it; and that the world was originally formed out of water. And in this he represents them as agreeing with the Greeks.§ That very ancient Greek poet, Linus, wrote a poem on the cosmogony

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\* Concerning the antiquity and universality of this tradition, see Burnet's *Archæologia*, lib. ii. cap. i. and his *Telluris Theoria Sacra*, lib. i. cap. 4. et lib. ii. cap. 7.

See also Grot. *De Verit. Relig. Christ.* lib. i. sect. 16.

† *De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, &c.* tom. ii. p. 451, 452.

‡ Hyde *Hist. Vet. Persar.* cap. iii. p. 81.

§ Strabo, liv. xv. p. 1040. Edit. Amstel.

nia, or generation of the world, which he began thus, as Diogenes Laërtius informs us,

Ἦν ποτὶ τοὺς χρόνους οὗτος ἐν ᾧ ἅμιν πάντ' ἐκινήθη.  
 "There was a time when all things rose at once."

And from him Laërtius thinks Anaxagoras took his notion, that all things were mixed together, and Mind came and put them in order.\* Those philosophers who endeavoured to account for the origin of things merely from material and mechanical causes, without the intervention of an intelligent cause and author, and the poets who turned the cosmogonia, or account of the production of the world, into a theogonia, or an account of the generation of the gods, and confounded the one with the other, were the great depravers of the ancient tradition. Yet traces of it still remained among the people, and even among the poets and mythologists themselves; a remarkable instance of which we have in Ovid, who formed his *Metamorphoses* upon ancient traditions, and the received mythology. He begins his work with an account of the formation of the world out of a chaos, and has many things so agreeable to what Moses has said of it, that one would be apt to think that either he himself, or the authors whom he followed, had seen or heard of the Mosaic account of the creation; which, as appears from Longinus and others, the Pagans were not unacquainted with. But, supposing this to have been the case, he would not have made use of it in such a work as the *Metamorphoses*, if it had not been agreeable to the ancient received traditions. And it is observable, that he gives it a Pagan turn. And though he supposes one God to have been the great agent in the formation of the world, yet he at the same time supposes a plurality of deities, and seems to be at a loss which of them to ascribe it to.

Besides what has been said of the tradition of the creation of the world, it may be observed, that some notion of a supreme Deity was generally preserved among the nations,

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\* Laërt. in Proœmio, Segm. 4.

amidst all their superstitions and idolatries, and was never utterly extinguished in the Pagan world; and this is a farther proof of the remains of an ancient universal religion which had obtained from the beginning. There are several passages in heathen writers which represent the belief and acknowledgment of a Deity as having been derived by a constant tradition from the most remote antiquity. The author of the book *De Mundo*, among the works of Aristotle, calls it "a certain ancient tradition or doctrine derived to all men from their fathers." Ἀρχαῖος τις λόγος καὶ παῖρας ἀπὸν διδόμενος.\* And before him Plato, speaking of God's having the beginning, the end, and the middle of things, and being always accompanied with justice to punish those that transgress the divine law, represents this as what ancient tradition, ἡ παλαιὸς λόγος, testifies.† And Plutarch, in his treatise, *De Isid. et Osir.* speaking of the opinion, that the world is not upheld or carried about by chance, without understanding, or reason, or a governor, representeth it as an opinion of the utmost antiquity, παμπάλαιος δόξα, which had not its original from any known author, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἀλόεσταιν ἔχουσα, and was generally spread among the Greeks and Barbarians.‡ The most ancient legislators were not the inventors of it; but finding the notion of a divinity among the people, made use of it to give a greater authority to their laws and institutions. It may be traced up, as was before observed, to the first parents of the human race, to whom it was communicated by the wise and benign Author of their beings. And when once this principle was thus communicated, the standing evidences of a Deity, open to the view of mankind, in all ages, in his wonderful works, must have contributed to keep up the idea of it among the nations. And though it must be acknowledged, that they did not make that use of those discoveries which they might and ought to have done,

\* *De Mundo*, cap. vi. *Aristot. Oper. tom. I. p. 610. Edit. Paris, 1629.*

† *Plat. de Leg. lib. IV. Oper. p. 600. G. Edit. Lugd. 1590.*

‡ *Plut. Oper. tom. II. p. 369. B. Edit. Francof. 1620.*

yet the works of God, which were continually before their eyes, had undoubtedly a tendency to preserve some impressions of a Deity upon their minds, which could never be absolutely erased. I shall produce a few testimonies to this purpose among many which might be mentioned. Zeleucus, the Locrian, in his celebrated Proœmium or Preface to his Laws, saith, that "all those who inhabit the city and country ought first of all to be persuaded of the existence of the gods, especially when they look up to heaven, and contemplate the world, and the orderly and beautiful disposition of things. For these are not the works of chance or of men. And that they ought to worship and honour them, as the authors of all the real good things which befall us."\* "It is easy," saith Clinias, the Cretan, one of Plato's dialogists, in his tenth book of laws, "to prove this truth, that there are gods." And when the Athenian Hospes asks, "How is it proved?" he answers, "In the first place, the earth, the sun, the stars, and τὰ ζῶντα πάντα, the whole complexión and constitution of things, the well-ordered variety of seasons, distinguished by years and months, show it: as also the consent of both Greeks and Barbarians, who all agree that there are gods."† Cicero has many passages concerning the proofs of a Deity, as being obvious from the works of nature. "Who," says he, "is so blind, that when he looks up to the heavens, does not perceive that there are gods?" "Quis est tam cæcus, qui cum suspexerit in cœlos, non esse Deos sentiat?"‡ And in his Proem or Introduction to his Laws, he represents him as not worthy of the name of a man, whom the orderly courses of the stars, the vicissitudes

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\* This excellent fragment has been preserved to us by Stobæus. Serm. XIII. The reader may see it at large quoted and elegantly translated by the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moses: who has also well vindicated the genuineness of it against the objections of a famous critic. Div. Leg. vol. I. book ii. sect. 3d. p. 112, et seq. et 127, 128. 4th edit.

† Plato De Leg. lib. x. Oper. p. 664. Ficin. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

‡ Orat. Harusp. Respons. n. 9.

“of days and nights, the distributions and temperature of the seasons, and the various things produced out of the earth for our use and enjoyment, do not compel to be grateful?” “*Quem verò astrorum ordines, quem dierum et noctium vicissitudines, quem mensium temperatio, quemque ea quæ gignuntur nobis ad fruendum, non gratum esse cogant, hunc hominem omnino numerare qui deceat?*”<sup>\*</sup> And elsewhere, having mentioned several of the works of nature and providence, he asks, “How is it possible for us when we behold these and numberless other things of the same kind, to entertain a doubt, but that there presideth over them some maker of so great a work, if these things had a beginning, or a moderator and governor, if, as Aristotle supposes, they existed from eternity.” “*Hæc igitur et alia innumeralia cum cernimus, possumusne dubitare quin his præsit aliquis vel effector, si hæc nata sunt ut Platoni videtur, vel si semper fuerint, ut Aristoteli placet, moderator tanti operis et muneris?*”<sup>†</sup> Plutarch, in his treatise, *De Placit. Philos. lib. I. cap. vi.* reckons the observation of the heavenly bodies, their influences, the harmony of their motions, and the effects which they produce, to be one of the principal things which had led men into the notion of a Deity: though it must be owned, that he there speaks of men’s acknowledging a number of gods; among which he reckons the heaven, the earth, the sun, moon, and stars.<sup>‡</sup> I think it appears with great evidence from the several passages which have been produced, to which others might be added, that in the heathen world men were sensible of the force of the argument which is drawn from the beauty and order of the works of nature, to the existence and perfections of a Deity. But it is to be observed, that though they generally agreed that the formation of things was not owing to chance; yet in most of the passages here

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<sup>\*</sup> *De Legib. lib. II. cap. vii. p. 95, 96. Edit. Davis, 2d.*

<sup>†</sup> *Tuscul. Quæst. lib. I. cap. xxviii. p. 68. Edit. Davis, 4to.*

<sup>‡</sup> *Plut. Oper. tom. II. p. 880.*

referred to, they do not argue from the works of nature to one only supreme Cause, but seem rather to infer a plurality of deities or intelligent Causes, as the authors of this system. And many passages there are of this kind among the ancients. It is also observable, as I shall show distinctly in another place, that when the Pagan authors, who lived before the times of Christianity, urge the consent of nations against the Atheists in proof of a Deity, they generally speak of gods in the plural, and not of one God only. Yet, notwithstanding their polytheism, and the many gods they acknowledged and worshipped, which was a great and most culpable defection from the true primitive religion, they still retained in some degree the idea of one supreme Divinity. But it must be owned, that it seemed at length to dwindle into a notion of one God, superior in power and dignity to the rest, but not of a different kind from the other divinities they adored, whom they looked upon to be really and truly gods as well as he, and sharers in the sovereign dominion with him. That this was the general popular notion will appear in the farther progress of this work.

It is an observation of the learned Dr. Cudworth, that though the poets were the great depravers of the true primitive religion and theology among the Pagans, yet they kept up the ancient tradition of one supreme Deity. Amidst the crowds of divinities they mention, there is still running through all their writings the notion of one Supreme; of whom they speak in the most exalted terms, and to whom they ascribe the highest divine attributes, and which are really peculiar to the one true God; as that he is omnipotent, that he seeth all things, and governeth the whole world. They often call him the Father Almighty, the Father of gods and men. They describe him as the Universal Monarch, who ruleth men and the gods too. Several passages might be produced to this purpose from Homer and others of the Greek poets, who in this are followed by the Latins. The reader may particularly consult Plautus in the Prologue to his *Rudens*, ver. 9. Virgil, *Æneid.* lib. X. ver. 2. et 18.



Horace, Ode xii. lib. i. et lib. iii. Ode iv. Other testimonies are produced from the poets by that learned writer.\* Yet it cannot be denied, that they confounded him whom they represented as the supreme God, with that Jupiter of whom they told such indecent stories, and thus corrupted this great principle of all religion. This, however, may be gathered from their writings, that the notion of one supreme Divinity was still preserved among them, and never utterly extinguished amidst all the confusions and perversions of the Pagan theology.

I do not now enquire into the sentiments of the ancient philosophers concerning the one supreme God. These will be distinctly considered in a proper place. I shall only observe at present, that many of them contributed not a little to corrupt this great fundamental article of religion; though some of them were of a noble character, and said excellent things concerning the Deity, at the same time that they joined in the public polytheism and idolatry.

If from the more polite and civilized parts of the heathen world, we proceed to enquire how the case stood with the nations which are usually looked upon as illiterate and barbarous, we shall find that many of them had also a notion of one supreme Divinity; and even some of those, from whom one would have least expected it, seem to have preserved the ancient tradition in this respect more clear, than the nations among whom learning and science flourished.

It was for a long time thought, that the Hottentots, or nations which inhabit the countries about the Cape of Good Hope, had no notion of God at all: but the latest and best accounts assure us, that they believe one supreme Being. F. Tachart tells us, that in conference with some of the most intelligent Hottentots, he found that they believed there is a God who made heaven and earth, and causeth it to thunder and rain, &c. but did not think themselves obliged to worship him. This is confirmed by other writers of credit, particu-

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\* Cudworth's Intel. System, chap. iv. sect. 19. p. 355. et seq. 2d edit.

larly by Mr. Kolben, whose accounts of the Hottentots are most exact, and the most to be depended upon. He took particular pains, whilst he was at the Cape of Good Hope, where he lived several years, to inform himself of their religion and customs; and affirms, that they believe a supreme Being, the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things that are therein, through whose omnipotence all things live and move; and that this Being is endued with unsearchable attributes and perfections; giving him a name which in their language signifieth the God of gods. This may seem to argue high ideas of the Divinity. But then it is to be observed, that they say of this supreme God, that he is a good man, doing no harm to any body, and dwells far above the moon; and that they pay no distinct worship to him, though they do to the moon. They also worship an evil being, whom they look upon to be the father of mischief, that they may avert his malice.\* Considering their character, it can hardly be supposed that their notions of a supreme Being, as far as they are just and right, are the effect of their own reasoning, to which in matters of religion they are observed to have an utter aversion; but must have proceeded from the remains of ancient tradition, derived to them from their ancestors, of whose opinions and customs they are very tenacious. There are other old traditions among them, some remarkable instances of which are mentioned by that author.

The same observation may be made concerning the Negroes in Guinea. We are told, that they generally acknowledge one supreme almighty Being: but believe he is too far above us to take notice of poor mortals: and therefore they pay him no manner of adoration; neither praying to him, nor giving him thanks for any thing: but pray and sacrifice to a multitude of other deities, some of which are extremely ridiculous.†

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\* See Kolben's Account of the Cape of Good Hope. English translation. vol. I. chap. viii.

† See Salmon's account of Guinea in his *Modern History*, from Bosman and other authors.

It appears from both ancient and modern accounts of India, that there are several tribes and nations there, who acknowledge and worship one supreme Being, as the original and productive cause of all things : but that this God does not concern himself immediately with things of little moment, but has created other gods to be his vicegerents ; and these again have their subordinate gods, of whom they suppose an amazing number, to each of whom worship is due.\*

The people of Ceylon in the East Indies, as Mr. Knox informs us, who lived there twenty years, worship many gods, and even evil spirits, lest they should be destroyed by them ; yet they acknowledge one God to be the supreme, whom they call by a name which signifies the Creator of heaven and earth ; but that he sends forth inferior gods, to whom he hath committed the care of affairs.† Of these there are many images, and they have priests and temples dedicated to them, but none to the Supreme.

As to the people of America, Acosta tells us, “ that this “ is common to almost all the barbarians, that they acknowledge a God supreme over all things, and perfectly good :” and he adds, “ that therefore they ought to be carefully “ taught who is that supreme and eternal Author of all things, “ whom they ignorantly worship.”—“ Hoc commune apud “ omnes penè barbaros est, ut Deum quidem omnium rerum “ supremum et summè bonum fateantur.—Igitur et quis ille “ summus idemque sempiternus rerum omnium opifex, quem “ ignoranter colunt, per omnia doceri debent.”‡ And Lafa-

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\* Narrative of the Danish Missionaries, Part 2d. p. 7. et seq. And Phillips' Account of the Religion, &c. of the people of Malabar.

† This notion of God's not concerning himself with the affairs of this world, but committing them wholly to inferior deities, obtained very generally among the Pagans, and was a principal cause of the idolatry which prevailed among them. For hence it came to pass, that in process of time their regards and worship were almost wholly confined to these inferior deities, upon whom they thought they immediately depended ; whilst the supreme God was regarded as little more than an ideal being, and almost entirely neglected.

‡ Jos. Acosta De procuranda Indorum salute, lib. V. p. 475, as cited by Cudworth. But though they acknowledged the chief God to be very good, many of

teau, in his *Mœurs des Sauvages* observes, that they acknowledge one supreme Being or Spirit: though he adds, that they confound him with the sun, whom they call the Great Spirit, the author and master of life.\* I believe this is true of many of those savages; but still it shows they had a notion of one supreme Deity, though they misapplied it to the sun. Some of the Americans, however, seem to have had a notion of a supreme Deity above the sun. Garcilasso de la Vega says, that the most ancient inhabitants of Peru, before the Incas came among them, and whom he represents as extremely rude and uncultivated, yet acknowledged one supreme God, whom they called Pacha Camack; and said, that it was he that gave life to all things, and sustained and preserved the universe; but that as he was invisible, and they did not see him, they could not know him: and therefore to him they seldom erected temples, or offered sacrifices; though they showed their veneration for him by bowing their head, and lifting up their eyes, when his sacred name was mentioned. One temple, however, was erected to him, in a valley called the Valley of Pacha Camack, which was standing when the Spaniards first came into those parts. The Incas made them worship the sun from political views: in consequence of which Pacha Camack became in a great measure neglected. We are told also concerning some of the inhabitants of Florida, that they worshipped one God, the Creator of all things, whom they call Okee: their high priests offer sacrifice to him; but they believe he minds not human affairs himself, but commits the government of them to other deities, whom they therefore worship, especially the sun and moon.

Thus it appears that there are traces of the belief of one supreme Deity among many different nations in the several

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them were principally solicitous to worship an evil being or beings, for fear of their doing them mischief.

\* So we find in a passage, which I shall afterwards cite from Macrobius, that the civilized Roman and Greek Pagans, in their solemn acts of devotion to the sun, called him the Spirit of the World, the Power of the World, the Light of the World.

parts of the world, and even among people which are accounted the most barbarous ; and this can hardly be supposed to be merely owing to the force of their own reasoning, destitute as they are of learning and improvement. It is most natural to ascribe it to the remains of an ancient universal religion, which obtained from the beginning, and was derived from the first ancestors of the human race. It must be owned, that there have been and are other nations, among whom this great article of the ancient religion appears to have been almost entirely lost, and who acknowledged and worshipped many gods, without seeming to have had any distinct notion of one God that is absolutely supreme above all the rest. But not to insist upon this at present, I would observe, that even in those nations which still retain the notion of a supreme Deity, this venerable tradition, though highly agreeable to reason, came at length, through the negligence and corruption of mankind, to be amazingly perverted and depraved. It was covered and overwhelmed, so as to be scarce discernible under a monstrous load of superstitions and idolatries. Some nations which acknowledged a supreme Being rendered him no worship at all ; in others his worship was so mixed and confounded with that of idol deities, that scarce any traces of it appear in their worship, in their religion, and in their laws. The great number of divinities which were introduced from time to time, and the worship of which was established by public authority, turned off their attention and regards from the one true God, so that he was in a great measure neglected and overlooked, whilst they paid that worship to vain idols which was due to him alone. Mr. Locke, therefore, had just reason to say, that “in the crowds of wrong notions and invented rites, the world had almost lost sight of the only true God.”\* Lord Bolingbroke makes the same observation, that “they lost sight of him, and suffered imaginary beings to intercept the worship due to him

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\* Locke's Reason. of Christ. in his Works, vol. II. p. 530, 531. Edit. 3d.

“ alone.”\* Allowing the most favourable representations that can possibly be made of the state of the heathen world, consistently with truth and fact, the darkness and confusion the people were under with regard to the knowledge and worship of the one true God, was gross and deplorable to an astonishing degree ; so that they stood in great need of an extraordinary divine interposition to recover them from it. This is what I shall now proceed to show. And it will be proper to take some notice of the principal steps by which this grand defection from the right knowledge and worship of the only true God was brought about, and came to prevail so generally among the nations. And in carrying on this inquiry, I shall have a particular regard to those Pagan nations which have been most admired for their wisdom, and among whom learning and philosophy seemed to make the greatest progress.

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\* Bol. Works, vol. IV. p. 80. et 461. Edit. 4to.

## CHAP. III.

*The first corruption of religion, and deviation from the knowledge and worship of the one true God, was the worship of heaven and the heavenly bodies. This the most ancient kind of idolatry. It began very early, and spread very generally among the heathen nations.*

**T**HE most ancient idolatry, and which was probably the first deviation from the worship of the one true God, seems to have been the worship of heaven and the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars. Diodorus Siculus acquaints us, that “the most ancient people of Egypt, looking up to the world above them, and the nature of the universe, and being struck with astonishment and admiration, supposed the sun and moon to be the eternal and first or principal gods.” And he afterwards adds, that “they supposed that these gods govern the whole world.”\* This passage is cited by Eusebius, who also observes concerning the ancient Phœnicians, that *οἱ πρώτοι φυσικοὶ*, the first natural philosophers among them, or the first who professedly applied themselves to inquire into the nature of things, “looked upon the sun and moon, and other wandering stars, and the elements, and the things that were connected with these, to be the only gods.” Thus, instead of being led by contemplating the wonderful works of God, to adore him the glorious author, these searchers into nature worshipped the works themselves as gods. Trusting to their own wisdom, they began to neglect the ancient tradition which Moses lays down as the foundation of all religion, that *in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*. What has been said of the Egyptians and Phœnicians holds equally concerning the Assyrians and Chaldeans, whom many suppose

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\* Τῆς κατ' Αἴγυπτον ἀνθρώπου τὸ παλαιὸν γενομένης ἀναβλίψαντας εἰς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τὴν τῶν ὕλων φύσιν, καταπλαγίνοντας τε καὶ θαυμάσαντας ὑπολαβεῖν εἶναι θεὸς αἰθερὶς τε καὶ πρώτης τῶν τε ἡλίου καὶ τὴν σελήνην τέτυκτος δι' οὗς θεοὺς ὀφίστανται τὸν σύμπαντα κόσμον διακυβ. Diod. Sicul. lib. i. Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 9. ab initio.

to have been the first that rendered divine worship to the heavenly bodies. It is not, however, probable, that any of these nations fell all at once into the grossest kind of this idolatry. They began very early to apply themselves to the study of astronomy, and to make observations on the stars, their motions and influences. Among them judicial astrology had its rise. By indulging their speculations, they came to regard them as living intelligent beings, a notion which afterwards obtained very generally among mankind.\* At

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\* The learned Dr. Campbell is very positive that "beyond all doubt, man if, left to himself, without instruction, will conceive the heavenly bodies to be all animated; and that by inward life and power they perform all their motions." *Campbell's Necessity of Revelation*, p. 185, 186. And again, he says, "I cannot help being assured, that mankind, left wholly to themselves, having no supernatural revelation, will not only apprehend the heavenly bodies are animals, but will confine their thoughts, their hopes, and fears, to these superior beings, upon whom they judge by experience they depend; and will have no notion, no conception of an invisible Being, infinitely greater, who is over all, God blessed for ever." *Ibid.* p. 211. and p. 393. He expresses himself to the same purpose in other places, and thinks this is the most natural way of accounting for their original idolatry. It appears to me very probable, that men began very early to look upon the sun, moon, and stars, to be animated beings; and that this, with the consideration of their influences on this lower world, was what principally gave rise to the first and most ancient idolatry. But I cannot carry it so far as to pronounce with this learned writer, that men, if left to themselves, would, "beyond all doubt," conceive the heavenly bodies to be all animated, and to perform all their motions by an inward life and power; and that it would be as natural for them to look upon the stars to be living beings, as to believe that the animals they see about them, men, birds, beasts, &c. are living beings. I should think that their constant unvaried motions, so different from the spontaneous motions of animals, would rather lead men to conclude, that they did not move by an inward life and power of their own. Or, supposing men to regard them as living beings, it would not necessarily follow, that they could not raise their views beyond them to an invisible Deity. They might still look upon them to be the creatures and subjects of the Supreme; especially considering that, as hath been already shown, the notion of the supreme Being, who created heaven and earth, had been communicated to mankind from the beginning. There have been Christians who believed the stars to be animated. So did the famous Origen, who believed them to be endued by God with reason and wisdom, and yet did not think they ought to be worshipped, but God only, who made them to be what they are, and gave them light and understanding—and that the sun, moon, and other stars, all join with just men in praising God, and his only begotten Son. *Origen cont. Cels. lib. v. p. 237, 238.* The same may be said of that learn-



first probably they might consider them in a subordination to the Supreme, as the most glorious ministers of the Most High, and to whom the administration of things was chiefly committed; to whom, therefore, they paid a subordinate worship. But they came afterwards to regard them as the principal deities, who had a universal dominion, and on whom mankind had their chief dependence. Thus was introduced a plurality of deities; and the knowledge and worship of the only true God came to be in a great measure neglected and lost. Or, if they paid a greater worship to one god as superior to the rest, it was the sun. This kind of idolatry soon spread among the nations. Maimonides tells us concerning the ancient Zabians, who, he says, had filled a great part of the earth, that they held that there is no god beside the stars: that they are all deities; but that the sun is the great or chief god: and that the highest notion they formed of God was, that he is the spirit or soul of the celestial orbs.\* In like manner, Philo-Biblius, the translator of Sanchoniathon's Phœnician history, tells us concerning the ancient inhabitants of Phœnicia, that "they accounted this god," speaking of the sun, "to be the only Lord of heaven.—*Τέτον γὰρ θεὸν ἐνομαζέον μόνον* " *ἡρανεῦ κύριον.*" And therefore, he adds, that they called him Baal Samen, which in the Phœnician language has that signification.† The learned Mr. Sale, in his Preliminary Discourse to his translation of the Koran, observes from the Arabian writers, that the ancient Arabs, from the rising and setting of the stars, by long experience, observed what changes happen in the air, and at length came to ascribe divine power to them. And it appears from a passage in the ancient book of Job, that in his time, which was probably before

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ed Rabbi, Maimonides, who asserts, that the celestial orbs are intelligent and rational animals, which worship, praise, and celebrate their Creator and Lord. And he represents other Jewish doctors as of the same opinion. Maimon. More Nevoch. part ii. cap. 5.

\* Maimon. More Nevoch. part iii. cap. 29.

† Apud Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 10.

Moses, the worship of the heavenly bodies was practised in those parts of Arabia where he lived: though it is likely there were still many among them, as well as Job himself, who regarded it as a great iniquity, to be punished by the judge, and as a denying the God that is above. Job xxxi. 26, 27, 28. As to the ancient Persians, though Dr. Hyde will not allow what Herodotus affirms, that they worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, and the elements, all along from the beginning, yet he acknowledges that they fell very early into the worship of the heavenly bodies, even before the days of Abraham; though he affirms, that they were afterwards reclaimed from it, and that they all along still retained the knowledge and worship of the one supreme God. But whether this account may be depended upon or not, certain it is, that the idolatrous worship of the heavenly bodies had made a considerable progress in the world before the days of Moses, as is evident from his writings. And it is most expressly prohibited in his law.

With respect to the ancient Grecians, the testimony of Plato, in his *Cratylus*, has been often quoted. “The first inhabitants of Greece,” says he, “appear to me, to have esteemed these only to be gods, as many of the barbarians now do, the sun, and moon, and the earth, and stars, and heaven.”\* The same thing is signified by Aristotle, when he saith, that “it hath been delivered down to us by the ancients and those of old times, both that these (*viz.* the stars) are gods, and that the divinity comprehendeth whole or universal nature.”† And he observes, that “all the other things were added afterwards, for the better persuasion of the multitude, and for public utility, to keep up a reverence for the laws: such as, the representing the gods to be of

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\* Φαίνονται μάλ' οἱ πρῶτοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῶν περὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα τούτους μόνους θεοὺς ἡγνίσθαι, ὥσπερ νῦν πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων, ἥλιον, καὶ γῆν, καὶ ἄστέρα, καὶ οὐρανόν. Plat. Oper. Ficin. Edit. Lugdun. p. 263. B.

† Παραδίδεται ὑπο τῶν ἀρχαίων καὶ παλαιῶν, ὅτι θεοὶ, οἱ εἶσι οὗτοι, καὶ περιέχουσιν τὸ θεῖον τὴν ὅλην φύσιν. Arist. Metaph. lib. xiv. cap. 8. Oper. tom. II. p. 1003. Edit. Paris, 1629.

“ human form, or like to other animals, and other things of that kind.” When the Greeks grew in learning and politeness, they were still equally addicted to the worship of the heavenly bodies, as their rude ancestors had been, with this difference, that, as Aristotle intimates in the passage now referred to, they added other grosser idolatries and superstitions to it. It was for affirming the stars to be inanimate bodies, which was looked upon to be a denying their divinity, and for saying that the sun is a body of fire, and the moon a habitable earth, that Anaxagoras was accused at Athens for impiety; and, as some authors tell us, fined five talents, and banished.\* And though Plutarch seems to deny this, yet he owns in his life of Pericles, that Pericles took care to send Anaxagoras away from Athens, from an apprehension that he would be in great danger of being condemned by the Athenians if he stayed there. Even the great Socrates himself censured him, as guilty of presumption and arrogance.† And Plato, in the beginning of his tenth book of laws, charges that opinion as leading to Atheism, and a denial of divine providence: and he himself frequently prescribes the worship of the stars, which seem to be the principal divinities he recommends to the people. The other philosophers, and especially the Stoics, were of the same sentiments. Balbus, the Stoic, in Cicero’s second book, *De Natura Deorum*, when he argues for a providence, takes particular pains to prove, that the stars are gods, and to be worshipped as such. Plutarch gives an authentic testimony of the general opinion and practice of the Pagans in his time, and plainly expresses his own approbation of it. In his answer to Colotes, the Epicurean, he reckons it among the things which are most firmly believed, and which cannot without great absurdity be denied, that “ there is a Providence, and that the sun and moon are animated; whom,” says he, “ all men worship, and to whom

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\* Diog. Laërt. in Anaxagora, lib. ii. segm. 12, 13, 14.

† Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. iv. cap. 7. segm. 6, 7. p. 351. Edit. Oxon. 1749.

"they offer up sacrifices and prayers—Οἱ πάντες ἀνθρώποι θύουσ,  
 "καὶ προσέχουσι καὶ σέβουσι." \*

To this species of idolatry may also be referred their worshipping and ascribing divinity to the whole compass of the heaven or circumambient æther, which many of them esteemed to be the chief god; not indeed considered merely as inanimate, but as animated with a soul, of which all the heavenly bodies are partakers. Remarkably to this purpose is that passage of Ennius, preserved by Cicero. "Aspice hoc sublime  
 "candens, quem invocant omnes Jovem"—"Behold this resplendent height of heaven, which all men invoke as Jove." To this may be added a passage from Euripides, which Cicero translates thus:

"Vides sublime fusum, immoderatum æthera,

"Qui terram tenerp circumjectu amplectitur.

"Hunc summum habeto divûm, hunc perhibeto Jovem."—

"Thou seest the high unmeasurable expanse of æther, which encompasseth the earth in its tender embrace. This regard  
 "as the chief of the gods; celebrate this as Jupiter." † The famous Stoic, Chrysippus, argued, as Cicero informs us, that he whom men call Jupiter is the æther. "Chrysippus disputavit æthera esse eum quem homines appellant Jovem." That great naturalist, Pliny, says, "It is reasonable to believe, that this world, and that which by another name is called heaven, which encompasseth and governeth all things, is God, eternal, immense, and which was never made, nor shall be destroyed." ‡—"Mundum et hoc quod nomine alio  
 "cælum appellare libuit, cujus circumflexu reguntur omnia, numen esse credi par est, eternum, immensum, neque genitum, neque interitum." But it is to be observed, that when they ascribed divinity to the heavens, it is to be understood, not exclusively of, but as having a particular regard to the heavenly bodies, and especially the chief of them the

\* Plut. Oper. tom. II. p. 1123. Edit. Francof. 1620.

† De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 2 et 25.

‡ Hist. Nat. lib. ii. cap. 1.

sun. To him they ascribed the attributes peculiar to the one true God. Thus Ulysses in Homer saith of the sun, that "he seeth and knoweth all things;"—Παντ' ἑφορᾷ καὶ παντ' ἔπαυται.\* The Orphic verses, which whether composed by Orpheus himself or not, give in many instances a just representation of the ancient Pagan theology, describe him by the most glorious epithets, as "having an eternal eye that sees all things;"—πανδερχὲς ἔχον αἰώνιον ὄμμα; and as "the eye of righteousness, and the light of life;"—ὄμμα δικαιοσύνης, ζωῆς φῶς. Menander declares, that men ought to worship him as πρῶτον θεῶν—the first or chief of the gods. † Plotinus, and those Pythagoreans who lived a considerable time after Christianity had made some progress in the world, and who were very clear in their acknowledgments of the one supreme God, and pretended to an extraordinary degree of refinement, yet pleaded for the divinity and worship of the sun and stars, and for offering up prayers to them. The emperor Julian has a pompous oration in honour of the sun, whom he represents as the parent of mankind, who generates our bodies, and sends down our souls, and bestows upon us all the good things we enjoy—and concludes with supplicating to him for peace and safety here, and for joy and happiness hereafter. ‡ Macrobius, who flourished under the emperors Honorius and Theodosius, and who was himself a Pagan, § takes a great deal of pains to prove that the sun was the one universal deity, who was adored under several names and characters. This plea he manages with a variety of learning, in the person of Vettius Prætextatus, one of great eminence among the Pagans of that time, whom he represents as the president of all the sacred rites, and intimately acquainted with their theology; "Sacrorum omnium præsul—sacrorum unicè conscius." See the first book of his Saturnalia, the 17th and following chapters. And he concludes with ob-

\* Odys. M. v. 321.

† Apud Campbell. Necess. Revel. p. 203, 295.

‡ Orat. 4.

§ See this clearly proved by Mr. Masson, in his Tract on the Slaughter of the children of Bethlehem.

serving, that the priests and divines were wont to use this prayer in their devotions or holy ceremonies: "O almighty  
 " or all governing Sun, the spirit of the world, the power of  
 " the world, the light of the world."—*Ἡλίου παντοκράτορ, κόσμου*  
*πνεῦμα, κόσμου δύναμις, κόσμου φῶς.*" And he adds a quotation  
 from some verses ascribed to Orpheus, in which the sun is  
 called Jupiter and Bacchus, the father of sea and land; and  
 the generation of all things is attributed to him.\*

The same Macrobius acquaints us, that the Assyrians gave  
 the name Adad to him whom they worshipped as the highest  
 and greatest God; that this name being interpreted signifies  
 One, and that by him they understood the sun. "Assyrii  
 " Deo, quem summum maximumque venerantur, Adad no-  
 " men dederunt: ejus nominis interpretatio significat Unus.  
 " Hunc igitur ut potentissimum adorant Deum: sed subjun-  
 " gunt eidem Deum nomine Adargatin, omnemque potesta-  
 " tem cunctarum rerum his duobus attribuunt, solem terram-  
 " que intelligentes."† It appears from Philostratus, that the  
 Indian Brahmins, who were extolled by Apollonius, as far  
 excelling all the wise men upon earth, made the sun the chief  
 object of their worship, and were themselves called the priests  
 of the sun. As to the Chinese, it is said to have been the  
 custom from the time of their first emperor, Fohi, for their  
 emperors to sacrifice to heaven and earth. And F. Navarette,  
 who lived many years in China, and was well acquainted with  
 their language, religion, and learning, looks upon it as a cer-  
 tain thing, that the Chinese have from a remote antiquity wor-  
 shipped the sun, moon, and stars; and that they knew no-  
 thing more noble than the material heaven which we behold.  
 He adds, that "so say their books, and their learned men own  
 " it."‡ Tavernier, in his account of Tonquin, which was  
 formerly under the dominion of China, though for some hun-

\* Macrob. Saturnal. lib. i. cap. 23. p. 217. Edit. Lond. 1694.

† Ibid.

‡ See Navarette's Account of China in Churchill's Collection of Travels, &c. vol.  
 i. p. 74, 84, 85. et ibid. p. 188, 189.

dreds of years past it has had kings of its own, relates, that they sacrifice to the sun, moon, and other planets; and have four principal gods, and one goddess. We are told, that the greater part of the inhabitants of the vast Eastern Tartary worship a plurality of deities; and particularly the sun, moon, and the four elements. \* Herodotus affirms concerning all the Libyans, that they sacrificed only to the sun and moon: and both he and Strabo say of the Massagetæ, that they esteemed the sun to be the only deity, and sacrificed a horse to him. † The sun was also the principal deity of the Mexicans and Peruvians in America, to whom they erected temples, and offered sacrifices, and paid their most solemn acts of worship: and if some had a notion of a God higher than the sun, they looked upon him to be too far above them, and therefore had little regard to him in their devotions. I might instance also in the ancient inhabitants of Terra Firma in America, of New Granada, and Hispaniola, the Canary and Philippine Islands, the Gallans, a people bordering on Abyssinia, and several other African nations; as also the ancient Gauls, Germans, and other nations in Europe. ‡

Thus it appears, that this kind of idolatry, which the Scripture calls the worship of the host of heaven, hath spread generally through the Pagan nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, not only among the savage and illiterate, but the most learned and polite. Human wisdom and philosophy, instead of reclaiming them from it, rather devised plausible colours and pretences to palliate or justify it. And it is owing principally to the light of the Jewish and Christian revelation, that this idolatry is now banished from so many nations among whom it anciently prevailed. Lord Herbert, who endeavours to represent the Pagan religion in the most favourable light, after having, in the fourth and following chapters of his book,

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\* Grimston's States and Empires, p. 701.

† Herod. lib. iv. cap. 188. Strabo Geogr. lib. xi.

‡ The reader may consult, concerning several of the nations here mentioned, Millar's Hist. of the Propag. of Christianity, vol. ii.

*De Religione Gentilium*, given an account of the worship paid by the Pagans, ancient and modern, to the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, and which he represents to be universal, apologizes for it at the end of his eighth chapter, by saying, that they worshipped the stars to the honour of the supreme God. "Omnes stellas, sed in summi Dei honorem, certè *"olim fuisse, et etiamnum esse cultas, concludimus."* This indeed was pretended by some of the philosophers, and particularly by those of them who stood up as advocates for Paganism after Christianity had made its appearance in the world; as if it could tend to the honour of the only true God to render that religious worship and adoration to the works which he hath made, which is due to him the glorious Author. That noble writer himself, in his 3d chapter, after mentioning the names of the Deity which were in use among the Hebrews, and shown that those names and titles were also used among the Gentiles, owns that the Hebrews appropriated those names and titles to the one supreme God superior to the sun, but that the Gentiles understood by him no other than the sun itself. "*Quamvis superius sole numen sub hisce nominibus intellexerunt Hebræi solem neque aliud numen intellexerunt Gentiles."* He insinuates indeed that the worship paid to the sun was symbolical, rendered to the sun as the most glorious image and symbol of the Divinity. And I do not deny, but that this might be the notion which some persons of sublime speculation entertained of it. But it does not appear; that the vulgar Pagans, who worshipped the sun and stars, carried their refinements so far. His Lordship himself expresses a doubt, that the people did not sufficiently understand that symbolical worship. "*Symbolicum illum cultum haud satis forsan intellexit.*"\* And I think from the accounts that are given us, it may be reasonably concluded, that the generality of the vulgar heathens, and many even of their learned men and philosophers themselves, though they had not entirely lost the idea of the

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\* *Herb. De Relig. Gentil.* p. 293. Edit. Amstel. 8vo. 1700.



one supreme God, transferred it to the sun. To him they attributed the divine titles and attributes: on him they terminated their worship, and in conjunction with him, though in a kind of subordination to him, on the other stars, and on the earth and elements; all which they supposed to be animated. The last mentioned learned and noble author supposes them to have worshipped the sun "*vice summi Dei*," and represents them as having acted no less absurdly than those would do, who, coming to the court of a most powerful monarch, should give the honours due only to the king to the first courtier they saw clothed in splendid apparel. "*Certè qui solum vice summi Dei coluerunt, proinde fecere, ac illi qui ad aulam potentissimi principis accedentes, quem primum amictu splendido indutum cernerent, regium illi cultum deferendum existimaverint.*" \*

Thus we have considered the first great deviation from the knowledge and worship of the true God among the heathen nations. And I shall conclude the account of this kind of idolatry with the elegant representation made of it by the author of the book of Wisdom. "Surely vain are all men by nature, who are ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things that are seen know him that is: neither by considering the works did they acknowledge the workmaster; but deemed either fire or wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the violent water, or the lights of heaven, to be the gods which govern the world. With whose beauty, if they being delighted took them to be gods, let them know how much better the Lord of them is: for the first author of beauty hath created them. But if they were astonished at their power and virtue, let them understand by them, how much mightier he is that made them. For by the greatness and beauty of the creation, proportionably the Maker of them is seen. †

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\* *Herb. De Relig. Gentil.* p. 26. Edit. Amstel. 1700.

† *Wisd. chap. xiii.* 1—5.

## CHAP. IV.

*The worship of deified men and heroes another species of idolatry of an ancient date, and which obtained very early in the Pagan world. Most of the principal objects of the heathen worship, the Dii majorum Gentium, had been once dead men. The names and peculiar attributes originally belonging to the one supreme God applied to them, particularly to Jupiter; to whom at the same time were ascribed the most criminal actions. Jupiter Capitolinus, the principal object of worship amongst the ancient Romans, not the one true God, but the chief of the Pagan divinities. The pretence, that the Pagan polytheism was only the worshipping one true God under various names and manifestations, examined and shown to be insufficient. The different names and titles of God erected into different deities.*

**T**HERE was another species of idolatry, which also began very early in the world, and very generally prevailed, which was the worship of deified men or heroes. Here a new scene of polytheism opens, which produced an amazing multiplicity of gods, and continually increased. Philo Biblius, as cited by Eusebius, observes, that “the most ancient barbarians, especially the Phœnicians and Egyptians, from whom other people took this custom, reckoned those among the greatest gods, who had been the inventors of things useful and necessary to human life, and who had been benefactors to the nations.” And that to them they consecrated pillars and statues, and dedicated sacred festivals.\* It is probable, that at first these things were little more than monuments or memorials to their honour, but afterwards became religious rites; and from honouring and celebrating their memory, they proceeded to regard them as deities. Thus, as the author of the book of Wisdom expresses it, “in process of time an ungodly custom grown strong was kept as a law, and graven images were worshipped by the commandments of kings.”† It was the notion of hero deities, which principally introduced the worship of images in human form, to which divine honours were paid. And what is there said of kings, may be applied to most of the ancient

\* Euseb. Præp. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 9. p. 32, 33. Edit. Paris, 1628.

† Wisd. chap. xiv. 16.

apostates, and the tyrants and governors of cities and commonwealths. Some private views they encouraged the worship of some who, and these were men, and took them into the number of *numina*.<sup>\*</sup> This became part of the religion of the state, with which the people readily complied, and which in its effects was carried so far, as in a great measure to banish the knowledge and worship of the one true God out of the nation. As those that set up the heaven, the sun, and stars, for gods, did apply to them the names and attributes of the immortal Deity, so when the custom of worshipping deified men took place, their names and titles, and the rites of their worship, came at length to be confounded with those of the celestial deities: and both the one and the other had those attention merited to them, and that worship paid them, which properly belong to the one God, the Creator of the universe. Philo Biblus, in the passage above referred to from Eusebius, observes, it is a thing particularly remarkable, that they applied the names of their kings to the elements of the universe, and to several of those things which they esteemed to be gods, and which he calls *φανερὰ θεοί*, *natural gods*, viz. the sun, moon, and stars. This caused an inextinguishable confusion in the heathen worship, as Selden has observed.† Thus, Osiris among the Egyptians, Bel among the

\* Cicero in the person of Balbus the Stoic, very much approves the custom of paying divine honours to famous men, and regarding them as gods. *De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 24* p. 163, 164. Edit. Cantabrig. 1723. And in his 3d book *De Nat. Deor. cap. 10* p. 515, Cicero observes, that in most cities it was usual, in order to encourage men to hazard their lives for the commonwealth, to take those who had been eminent for their fortitude, into the number of their gods: of which he there gives several instances. Accordingly, this is what Cicero himself practises in his second book of *Laws*, where he requires, that those gods should be worshipped, whom their merits had raised into heaven. *De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 8* p. 133. And it will appear from a passage to be soon quoted from him, that even those which were accounted the chief of the Pagan deities, were such as had been once men. Such was the effect of modelling religion by the rules of human wisdom and policy, which, in this as well as other instances, has greatly corrupted and depraved it.

† Seld. *De Tit. Spem. Proleg. cap. iii. p. 1.* Edit. Lips. To the same purpose Lord Herbert. *On Divine honours in ancient philosophy, secta in heroicis colon.*

Chaldeans, and the Baal of the Phœnicians, signified both a deified man and the sun. Many other names of their gods might be mentioned, which were the names both of stars and heroes : and they were both honoured with the most divine titles and epithets. Several eminent writers have shown that the names of some of the Pagan deities were corruptions of the Hebrew names of God, as Jove, Evius, Sabius, &c. which were originally understood of the one supreme Deity, but afterwards came to be applied to deified heroes. Who those heroes were that were first worshipped among the Pagans as gods, the learned are not agreed. Some celebrated authors have displayed an abundance of learning to show that all the fables relating to the ancient Pagan divinities, and the actions ascribed to them, were taken from the Scripture accounts of Noah, the Patriarchs, of Moses, and the most eminent Jewish heroes. This seems to be carrying the matter too far : yet, I think, they have offered enough to render it probable, that this was the case in several instances, and that there was in the heathen mythology a mixture of obscure traditions relating to some of the patriarchs before and after the flood, and other eminent persons mentioned in Scripture. These were jumbled together with the accounts of the ancient Egyptian and Grecian heroes, and afterwards further disguised and embellished with poetical fictions, so that it is scarce possible clearly to discern and distinguish the genuine original traditions, from what was afterwards added to them. The Abbé Banier, in his mythology of the ancients, has offered a great deal to prove that the fables of antiquity are not merely allegorical, but founded upon facts, and under the disguise of divers fictitious circumstances contain the history of many real events. He gives a particular detail of the history of the ancient deities of the Egyptians, Ethiopians, Phœnicians, Syrians, Chaldeans, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans,

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"tes, adeo ut cognomines ita essent, neque satis judicari posset num aniles de  
 "iis contextæ fabulæ ad astra mysticæ, an ad homines mythicæ pertinerent." De  
 Relig. Gentil. cap. xi.

Gauls, Germans, and other nations.\* Sir Isaac Newton, in his *Chronology*, has also considered this matter, and given a good account of the ancient deities, so famous in Pagan story, especially among the Egyptians and Greeks. It may not be improper here to mention a judicious observation of Pausanias, that, "in every age, many events which happened a long time ago, have been rendered incredible by those who have raised a superstructure of lies upon things which were originally true." He adds, that "they who heard these fabulous relations with pleasure, were apt to add to them other fictions, and so the truths by mixing falsehoods with them were corrupted and destroyed."† As the Pagans had among them traditionary accounts of the lives and actions, both good and bad, of those persons who had been deified, these being mixed with fables, were wrought into their theology: which had the most pernicious effect upon their religion and worship. Cotta, in Cicero *De Nat. Deor.* lib. i. cap. 42. speaking of those who said that famous and powerful men had after death obtained divine honours, and been admitted into the number of the gods; and that these are the gods whom we are wont to supplicate and adore; adds, that this subject was particularly treated of by Euhemerus, the

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\* The Abbé Pluche, in his *Histoire du Ciel*, goes upon a different scheme. He endeavours to show, that the Egyptian mythology, religion, and theogony, from which that of the Greeks and Romans was derived, was wholly owing to an abuse of the ancient hieroglyphical characters, which were originally nothing else than signs to advertise the Egyptians of the increase and decrease of the Nile, of the variations of the seasons, the rules of agriculture, and the different labours of the husbandman, and other things of the like nature. That it might be so in several instances, and that an abuse of the hieroglyphical characters probably gave occasion to some of the ancient mythological fables, may be allowed, and had been observed by learned men before. But to make this the sole original of the gods and goddesses of the Egyptians and Greeks, with all their sacred rites and ceremonies, is a scheme that cannot be supported. His conjectures are very ingenious; but in the extent to which he has carried them, serve only to show, how apt learned men are, when they have fallen upon a new and favourite hypothesis, to run into extremes.

† Έν τῷ πάντι αἰωνι πόλλα μὲν πάλαι συμβάστα μνησίσι δὲ γιγνόμενα ἀπισστα ἴσθαι πεποιήσασιν οἱ τοῖς ἀλήθειαν ἐποικοδομοῦντες ἰψιυμμένα. Pausanias in *Arcadicis*.

Messenian, whose work was translated by Ennius into Latin; and that he showed both when they died and where their sepulchres were to be seen. "Ab Euhemero autem et mortēs et sepulturæ demonstrantur deorum."\* He indeed there insinuates that those who talked thus were void of all religion; "expertes religionum omnium." And puts the question, whether Euhemerus did not instead of confirming religion, take it away entirely? "Utrum igitur hic confirmasse religionem videtur, an penitus totum sustulisse?" Yet the same Cotta, in the third book *De Nat. Deor.* cap. xv. et seq. insists largely upon it, that some of their gods were once mortals; and represents those accounts as collected from ancient fame or traditions of the Greeks. "Ex veteri Græciæ fama collecta." Ibid. cap. xxiii. And Cicero, in one of his best treatises, expresses himself very fully to the same purpose. He says that "almost the whole heaven is filled with the human race: that upon searching into the ancient accounts, and what the Greek writers have delivered from them, it will be found, that even those that are accounted the greater deities, *Dii majorum gentium*, were taken from among men into heaven: that their sepulchres were shown in Greece." And he intimates, that "these things were delivered in the mysteries themselves, as those that were initiated knew."† The *Dii majorum gentium*, which were also called *Consentes*, were comprehended by Ennius in this distich,

"Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars,  
"Mercurius, Jovis, Neptunus, Vulcanus, Apollo."

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\* Lactantius gives a particular account of Euhemerus, and acquaints us, that he gave the history of their births, marriages, offspring, actions, government, and death. *Divin. Instit.* lib. i. cap. ii. p. 62. et *De Irâ Dei*, cap. ii. p. 794. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1660.

† "Totum prope cœlum, nonne humano genere completum est? Si verò scrutari vetera, et ex his ea quæ Scriptores Græciæ prædiderunt, eruere coner; ipsi illi, majorum gentium dii qui habentur, hinc a nobis profecti in cœlum reperiuntur. Quare quorum demonstrantur sepulchra in Græcia reminiscere, quoniam es initiatus, quæ traduntur in mysteriis; tum denique, quam late hoc pateat intelliges." *Tuscul. Disput.* lib. i. cap. 12, 13. p. 30. Edit. Davis, 1738.

Thus, according to Cicero, those which were esteemed the superior deities, and were the principal objects of the Pagan worship, had been once men: and this was taught even in the mysteries.\* By the way I would observe, that this is absolutely subversive of the scheme of those who would make the names of these gods pass only for different names and manifestations of the one supreme Divinity: which was the pretence of some of the ancient philosophers and apologists for Paganism, and has been adopted by several learned moderns. Plutarch indeed, in his treatise, *De Isid. et Osir.* passes a very severe censure upon Euhemerus for giving such accounts of their gods, as made them to have been originally no more than kings and great men. He charges this as tending to the utter subversion of all religion.† But whatever tendency it might have to expose the Pagan religion, it cannot reasonably be denied that some of those which were accounted their principal deities had been originally of the human race. From this very treatise of Plutarch, in which he censures Euhemerus, it appears that some of the Egyptian priests themselves, speaking of Osiris, whom they called the great and good, the lord of all, gave an account of his birth, his actions, and exploits; that he was king of Egypt, and that he drew the Egyptians from a savage beastly way of living, by teaching them agriculture, and the use of grain, giving them laws, and instructing them how to honour the gods. They mention the years of his reign, the time and circumstances of his death, and pretended to show his sepulchre. And I cannot help thinking that they who resolved these things into, ancient

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\* Yet to show how inconsistent the heathens were in their theology, when some lands in Bœotia were exempted by law from taxes, because they belonged to the immortal gods, the Roman publicans, or tax-gatherers, were not willing to allow it, under pretence, that none were to be esteemed immortal gods, who had once been men. So Cotta in Cicero informs us. "*Nostrī quidem publicanī, cum essent agri in Bœotia deorum immortalium excepti lege censoria, negabant immortales esse ullos qui aliquando homines fuissent.*" *De Nat. Deor.* lib. iii. cap. 19. p. 294.

† Plutarch. *Oper.* tom. II. p. 360. A. Edit. Francof. 1620.

historical traditions, though these traditions were undoubtedly very much obscured and mixed with fables, gave a much more reasonable account of them, than those who endeavoured to resolve them wholly into physical allegories, which, by the account Plutarch gives of them, were very much forced; and in the explication of which they were by no means agreed. And the hypothesis which he himself hath advanced, attributing these things to good or evil demons, which others ascribed to their heroes, hath nothing to support it but his own imagination.\*

Callimachus, in his hymn to Jupiter, charges the Cretans as liars, for pretending that they had his sepulchre among them; whereas he never died, but existed always; yet he himself affirms Jupiter to have been born in Arcadia. The learned Dr. Cudworth, who mentions this, makes a reflection upon it, which, he says, may pass for a general observation, that “the Pagan theology was all along confounded with a certain mixture of physiology and herology” (that is, the history of their great men and heroes) “blended together.” This observation, which that excellent writer frequently repeats, may help us to judge how far that hypothesis is to be depended upon, which he takes so much pains to establish, that the Jupiter of the Pagans was the one true supreme God, and worshipped as such, not only by the philosophers but by the people. He roundly asserts that, “as for the vulgar of the Greekish Pagans, whether they apprehended God to be a mind or intellect separate from the world, or else to be a soul of the world only,† it cannot be doubted, but by the

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\* Plutarch. Oper. tom. ii. p. 360. A. Edit. Francof. 1620.

† I think the Doctor here makes a very imperfect enumeration of the various senses in which Jupiter was taken by the people, and even by the learned Pagans themselves. Some by Jupiter understood the world itself; others, the soul of the world. And Macrobius affirms Jupiter to be the sun. Saturnal. lib. i. cap. 23. He begins that chapter thus: “Nec ipse Jupiter rex deorum solis naturam videtur excedere: sed eundem esse Jovem claris docetur indiciis. —Jupiter himself the king of the gods, does not seem to exceed the nature of the sun: and that Jupiter is the same with the sun appears from clear evidences.” Others sup-



“ word *Zeu*; they commonly understood the supreme Deity in “ one or other of those senses, the father and king of gods; he “ being frequently thus styled in their solemn nuncupation of “ vows,—O Jupiter father, and O Jupiter king,—*Zēu pater*, “ *Zēu āva*. And that the Latins did, in like manner, by Jupiter and Jovis, frequently denote the supremē Deity and “ Monarch of the universe is a thing unquestionable, and “ which does sufficiently appear from those epithets which “ were given him of *optimus* and *maximus*, the best and “ greatest, and also of *omnipotent*, frequently bestowed upon him by Virgil and others.”† And he thinks the very name of Jupiter or Jovis was of an Hebraical extraction, and derived from the tetragrammaton, which was pronounced Jovah or Javoh, or *Iēhō* or *Iāh*, or the like. And the abbreviation of this was Jah: and from thence came Jovis pater, Jove the father, abbreviated into Jupiter.\* I shall not contest this etymology of the name Jupiter, which many learned men have thought probable. But that this name, which might have been originally designed to express the supreme God, was afterwards generally applied by the Pagans to the principal of their hero deities, cannot be reasonably denied. It admits of the clearest proof, that the Jupiter of the poets, whom they often honoured with the most magnificent epithets, as the thunderer, the omnipotent, the father of gods and men, and whom they frequently describe as exercising a sovereign universal dominion, is the same Jupiter of whom they make such indecent representations, and of whom the mythologists told such monstrous fables, many of which were adopted into their

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posed Jupiter to be the æther, as in the passages cited above from Euripides and Ennius. To whom may be added, Virgil, who calls the æther Pater Omnipotens. Horace often uses the word Jupiter to signify the air, as in lib. iii. Ode 10. verse 7, 8. Epod. 13. verse 2. but especially lib. i. Ode 1. verse 25. in the notes upon which, in the Delphin edition, there is a quotation from Varro, that the ancient Greeks by Jupiter understood the air, the wind, and clouds. But he seems generally to have been taken by the people for the hero deity, the son of Saturn, celebrated by the poets.

\* Intel. Syst. chap. iv. sect. xiv. p. 259, 260. 2d Edit.

† Ibid. et p. 451.

religion. Their ascribing to him such divine titles, and the government of all things, shows that they had among them a notion of one supreme Divinity, and of the attributes which properly belonged to him; but it also shews, that they confounded the one supreme God with the chief of their idol deities, and ascribed to the latter the peculiar characters and worship due to the former.

Many passages of this kind might be produced from Homer, who was in great esteem among the Pagans, both as a poet and a divine. I shall only mention a few out of the first book of his *Iliad*. He calls him the high thundering Jove, and represents him in the description which is so much admired by Longinus and others for its sublimity, as causing all heaven to tremble with his nod: "that he is the most excellent of all—*πᾶσι φίπτατος ἴσται.*" And he elsewhere describes him, "as the father of gods and men—*πατρὶς ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε*; who reign—*ἐθ' ὅτε θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων ἀνάσσει.*"\* Yet he mentions his being in danger from a combination of the other gods, Juno, Neptune, and Pallas, who had conspired to bind him with fetters; and that Thetis delivered him, and averted the danger, by calling in Briareus to his assistance. He also represents him as quarrelling with Juno, as reproached by her, and threatening her.† Hesiod, in his *Theogonia*, describes Jupiter by the most magnificent epithets, as the father of gods and men, the beginning and end of the muses' songs, the most excellent of the gods, the wise, or counsellor, and the greatest in might, by whose thunder the earth is shaken, who governs mortals and immortals; and he calls him the most glorious Jupiter, the greatest of all the eternal gods.‡ Yet, he says he was born of Rhea and Saturn, along with Vesta, Ceres, Juno, Pluto, Neptune, and was the youngest of their sons: that he dethroned his father Saturn, and expelled him from his empire, vers. 453, et seq. et 490.

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\* *Iliad* α'. vers. 354, 281, 528, 529, 530, 581.

† *Ibid.* vers. 397, et seq. 540, et seq.

‡ *Theogon.* vers. 47, 48, 49, 457, 458, 481, 506, 548.

The Latin poets talk in the same strain. Dr. Cudworth has produced some remarkable passages from Plautus, to show that the heathens acknowledge one supreme God, whom they called Jupiter, and entertained noble notions concerning him and his government of the world. Yet the same Plautus, in his *Amphytrio*, represents this very Jupiter as contriving and perpetrating the most criminal adultery; and whilst he ascribes to him a conduct so false and vicious, as scarce any but the worst of men could be guilty of, calls him that Jupiter whom all men ought to fear and reverence, “the king or ruler of the gods—*Deûm regnator*: who easily doeth whatever he wills—*facile quod vult facit*.” And he honours him with “the title of Jupiter the supreme lord of gods and men—*summus imperator divûm atque hominum Jupiter*.\* Ovid calls Jupiter “*Pater Omnipotens*—the Father Almighty,” even when he is going to tell of his deflowering Callisto. † And when he represents him as taking upon him the shape of a bull that he might carry off and commit a rape upon Europa, he gives that magnificent description of him, which the Doctor also produces to show that by Jupiter the supreme God was signified.

“*Ille pater, rectorque Deûm, cui dextra trisulcis.*

“*Ignibus armata est, qui nutu concutit orbem,*

“*Induitur tauri faciem.*” ‡

Where he calls him the father and ruler of the gods, whose right hand is armed with three-forked thunderbolts, who shakes the world with his nod.

Virgil was a poet of great learning and judgment, and he has several passages which have been produced to prove that the Pagans understood by Jupiter the one true supreme God. He frequently calls him “the Father Almighty—*Pater Omnipotens*, the Father of gods and king of men—*Divûm*

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\* *Amphytr.* Prolog. lin. 25, 45, 139. Act v. Scen. i. lin. 64.

† *Metamorph.* lib. ii. vers. 402.

‡ *Ibid.* vers. 850, 851.

“*pater atque hominum rex.*” \* He introduces Venus as addressing him in that noble manner :

“*O qui res hominumque Deûmque  
Æternis regis imperiis, et fulmine terras †.*”

Of the same kind is that other address of Venus to him :

“*O Pater, O hominum Divûmque æterna potestas.*” ‡

But let us consider who that Jupiter is, of whom the poet says these great things. It is the same Jupiter whom he describes as the father of Venus, and husband of Juno, and whom he represents as at a difficulty how to act, that he might not disoblige his wife or his daughter, who took opposite sides. Juno is introduced as boasting of herself, that she was the queen of the gods, and the sister and wife of Jupiter :

“*Divûm incedo regina Jovisque  
Et soror et conjux.*” §

And Jupiter himself in a soothing speech he makes to her, calls her his sister and beloved wife. || The same Jupiter is honoured by the poet with the character of Jupiter omnipotens, when he speaks of the prayer offered to him by Jarbas, king of the Gætulians, who was begotten by him of a Garamanian nymph.¶

The last poet I shall mention is Horace. There is an admirable passage in the 12th Ode of his first book, which has been often quoted :

“*Quid prius dicam solitis parentis  
Laudibus, qui res hominum ac deorum,  
Qui mare et terras, variisque mundum  
Temperat horis ?  
Unde nil majus generatur ipso ;  
Nec viget quidquam simile aut secundum.*”

Scarce any thing more sublime could be said of the one true supreme God. He represents him as exercising a universal

\* *Æneid. lib. i. vers. 65. et lib. x. vers. 2.*

† *Ibid. lib. i. vers. 229, 230.*

‡ *Ibid. lib. x. vers. 18.*

§ *Ibid. lib. i. vers. 46, 47.*

|| *Ibid. lib. x. vers. 607.*

¶ *Ibid. lib. iv. vers. 198, 206, 208.*

dominion, governing the affairs of gods and men, the sea, the land, and the seasons; than whom nothing is greater; nor is any thing like him, or that can be reckoned so much as second to him. Yet in this very Ode he addresses him as having sprung from Saturn; which shows that Jupiter, the son of Saturn, was that Jupiter of whom he had said such glorious things:

“*Gentis humanæ pater atque custos*  
“*Oris Saturno.*”

And he celebrates along with him, though in an inferior degree, Pallas, Liber, Phœbus.

Another passage of the same kind is in the fourth Ode of his third book, where he saith of Jupiter,

“*Qui terram inertem, qui mare temperat*  
“*Ventosum, et urbes, regnaque tristia,*  
“*Divosque mortalesque turmas*  
“*Imperio regit unus æquo.*”

Yet in the verses immediately succeeding this magnificent description, he represents the Jupiter he is speaking of, as having been in danger and struck with great terror by the insurrection of the Titans; “*magnum terrorem intulerat Jovi.*” But that he was assisted by Pallas, Vulcan, Juno, and Apollo. See also lib. ii. Ode 12. vers. 7, 8, 9. The same poet calls Jupiter the supreme or highest god, when he speaks of his amours with Latona, by whom he had Apollo and Diana—“*Latonamque supremo dilectam penitus Jovi.*” Lib. i. Ode 21. And he elsewhere hints at Jupiter’s debauching Danæ, and ravishing Ganymede. Lib. iii. Ode 16. and lib. iv. Ode 4.

I have insisted the more largely upon this matter, because great stress has been laid upon several of the passages which have been mentioned, to prove that, by the Pagan Jupiter the one true supreme God was understood, the same whom we adore: whereas the proper conclusion to be drawn from it is, not that the Jupiter celebrated by the poets was the one true God, but that they ascribed to their Jupiter, who was really an idol, the peculiar attributes and supreme dominion which belong only to the true God. And it must be observed that the Jupiter of the poets was the popular Jupiter, the object of

vulgar adoration among the Pagans. There is a passage of Dio Chrysostomus, Orat. 36. cited by Dr. Cudworth, which is very full to this purpose. He says, "All the poets call the first and greatest God the father and also the king universally of the whole rational kind: believing or being persuaded by whom, that is, by the poets, men erect altars to Jupiter the king, and stick not to call him father in their devotions—Οἷς περὶ δέμενοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι Διὸς βασιλέως ἰδρύονται βωμούς, καὶ δὴ καὶ πατέρα αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐκνεῦσι προσαγορεύσαν ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς."\* Where it is plainly intimated that it was by the poets that the people were instructed to erect altars, and to make their prayers and vows to Jupiter as the father and king of all. And Dr. Cudworth himself more than once observes, that "the poets were the prophets and chief instructors of the people." This learned writer also acknowledges that, "among the Greeks, Ζεὺς was supposed to have been at first the name of a man or a hero, but yet was afterwards applied to signify the supreme God." And he makes the same observation concerning the Egyptian Jupiter Hammon: which name he thinks to have been first derived from Ham or Cham, the son of Noah; though he endeavours to prove that it was used among the Egyptians to express the supreme Deity. But this only shows the truth of what he there observes, that "there might be such a mixture of herology or history, together with theology, amongst the Egyptians, as there was amongst the Greeks."† This must needs have produced a strange confusion in their theology and worship, and which continued all along during the times of Paganism, confounding the supreme God with an idol, and an idol with the Supreme. The same excellent writer is of opinion, that the Egyptian Jupiter Hammon is mentioned, Jer. xlv. 25. which he translates thus, "I will punish Amon No;" as it is in the margin of our Bibles, that is, as he interprets it "Amon the god of No." And he produces as parallel to this, the punish-

\* Intel. Syst. chap. iv. sect. 27. p. 448.

† Ibid. sect. 18. p. 338.

ments denounced in the 46th chapter of Isaiah, and in the 51st of Jeremiah's Prophecies, against Bel, which, according to Herodotus, was the name of the supreme God among the Babylonians.\* But these passages are by no means favourable to the Doctor's hypothesis, since they plainly show that those prophets, speaking in the name and by the inspiration of God himself, looked upon both Jupiter Hammon the chief god of the Egyptians, and Bel of the Chaldeans, not to have been the one true God, but idoldeities.

The same may be said of the Capitoline Jupiter, who was the highest object of the adoration of the Roman people, the chief god of their religion and of their laws. I am sensible, that very learned men have been of a different opinion, and particularly the justly celebrated author last mentioned, who maintains that the Jupiter worshipped in the Capitol was the one true supreme God, whom the Romans worshipped under that name. And it must be acknowledged that the most divine titles and attributes were ascribed to him. He was honoured with the glorious titles of "optimus et maximus—the best and greatest." Cicero, in one of his orations before the Roman people, *Pro Roscio Amerino*, N. 45, says of him, "Jupiter optimus, maximus, cujus nutu et arbitrio cœlum, terra, maria, reguntur—By whose nod and sovereign will, the heaven, the earth, and seas are governed." This is a noble description; but it is no more than the poets have frequently said of their Jupiter. So also the Cretan Jupiter, whose sepulchre was shown in Crete, is called by Plutarch, "Ἀρχὸν καὶ κύριον πάντων—the ruler and lord of all."† Seneca calls Jupiter "Custodem rectoremque universi, animam ac spiritum, mundani hujus operis dominum et artificem, cui nomen omne convenit—The guardian and ruler of the universe, the soul and spirit, the artificer and Lord of this mundane frame, to whom every name agrees." He afterwards says of him, he may be rightly called "mundus—

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\* Intel. Syst. chap. iv. sect. 18. p. 339, 340.

† Plut. De Is. et Osir. oper. tom. II. p. 581. D.

the world;" and adds, "*Ipse est totum quod vides, totus suis partibus inditus, et se sustinens vi suâ.*"\* And in other passages he speaks of Jupiter as the world, and the soul of the world, (which, according to the Stoics, was an intellectual fire or æther universally diffused) and as one great whole, of which we all are the parts and members.† When he here says "that to him every name agrees," he goes upon the notion adopted by the Stoics and some other philosophers, that the several Pagan deities were one God under different names: which pretence shall be considered presently. But in all this, it is plain, he represents only his own and the stoical opinion; not what the popular notion of Jupiter Capitolinus was, about which the enquiry properly lies. And here the same observation recurs, which was before made with regard to the poets. The divine epithets with which the Roman people honoured the Capitoline Jupiter, show that they still retained among them so much of the ancient tradition, as to have some notion of the supreme Divinity, and of the attributes which belong to him: but it also appears, that they strangely perverted and corrupted it, by applying the proper characters and attributes of the one true supreme God to that Jupiter who was really no more than the chief of their idol deities. For the Jupiter worshipped by the people in the Capitol was the same Jupiter who is celebrated by the poets. This is what Cicero signifies in a passage quoted by Dr. Cudworth: "Jupiter," says he, "is called by the poets the father of gods and men, and by our ancestors, the best and greatest;"—"Jupiter a poetis *dicitur divûm atque hominum pater, a majoribus autem nostris optimus maximus.*"‡ And indeed there are several things which show that the Capitoline was the same with the poetical Jupiter. Horace, in the sublime passage quoted above, where he speaks in the most exalted terms of the Jupiter whom the Romans worshipped, represents him as sprung

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\* Nat. Quæst. lib. ii. cap. 45.

† See a remarkable passage to this purpose in his 92d Epistle.

‡ De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 25.



from Saturn—"orte Saturno." Jupiter Capitoline was particularly described as the thunderer, and the father of gods and men; so also was the Jupiter of the poets. The poetic Jupiter had Juno for his wife, and Minerva for his daughter: so also Jupiter in the Capitol had Minerva and Juno joined with him. It was to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, that Tarquinius Priscus dedicated the Capitol, in consequence of a vow which he had made: and the two latter had chapels in the Capitol, the one on the right of Jupiter, the other on the left, and Jupiter himself in the middle. Hence Lactantius observes, that "the Jupiter of the Capitol was not usually worshipped without the partnership of his wife and daughter;"—"Jupiter sine contubernio conjugis filiaque coli non solet."\* An instance of this we have in Cicero's *Oratio pro Domo sua ad Pontifices*. He concludes it with a most solemn address to Jupiter, whom he there mentions in conjunction with Juno the queen, and Minerva, and the other deities which presided over their city and commonwealth. Jupiter is placed at the head of them, being looked upon as in a peculiar manner the guardian of the Roman empire: but still he was only one in the number of their divinities, though higher in dignity than the rest. The *Ludi Seculares* were the most solemn of all the Roman sacred games and festivals, to be celebrated once in one hundred and ten years; and which were designed both to do honour to the deities who were supposed to protect the Roman empire, and to implore a blessing from them upon the public. And in these festivals Jupiter was only one of the deities which were celebrated and invoked: with him were joined Juno, Latona, Apollo, and Diana, the *Parcæ*, Ceres, Pluto, and Proserpina; as Zosimus, who was a zealous Pagan, informs us.† And this also appears from Horace's famous *Carmen Seculare*, composed for that occasion.‡ The truth is, that the Roman Jupiter was one of the

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\* *Divin. Instit. lib. i. cap. 11. p. 63.*

† *Zosim. Hist. lib. ii.*

‡ There was another solemn act of devotion, which was sometimes performed

*Dii majorum gentium*, or the *Dii consentes*, ranked among them in the verses before cited from Ennius, as also by Varro: and it is observable that Cicero, in his second book of laws, when he treats of divine worship, takes no particular notice of Jupiter; but crowds him in among the other celestial gods, under the general rule. “*Divos, et eos qui cœlestes semper habiti, colunto.*” *De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 8. p. 100.*

The learned Dr. Cudworth, who takes notice of what Lactantius says about Juno and Minerva’s being joined with the Capitoline Jupiter in the public worship, though he is not willing to allow the inference which Lactantius draws from it, that Jupiter Capitolinus was not the one true God, yet observes on this occasion, that “it is plain there is here a certain mixture of the mythical or poetical theology, together with the natural, as almost every where else there was to make up the civil theology of the Pagans.”\* He adds, indeed, that “according to the more recondite and arcane theology of the Pagans, these three Capitoline gods, Jupiter, Minerva, and Juno, as well as some others, may be understood to have been nothing else but several names and no-

in the most ancient times of the Roman state, when persons devoted themselves to death for the safety of the commonwealth in times of imminent danger; and in this also Jupiter was considered only as in conjunction with other deities. They devoted themselves to Janus, Jupiter, Mars, the *Dii Manes*; praying them to bless and prosper the Roman Republic, and to bring destruction upon their enemies. The form of this devotion may be seen in Casaubon’s notes on Suetonius’ *Caligula*, cap. 14.

\* Those who were for interpreting this in a way of physical allegory, by Jupiter understood the æther, by Juno the air, and by Minerva the higher heaven. So Macrobius, in *Somn. Scip. lib. i. cap. 17. et Saturnal. lib. iii. cap. 4.* Servius in his notes on *Æneid. lib. i. vers. 50.* where Juno is called the sister and wife of Jupiter, observes, that *Physici*, the natural philosophers, understood by Jupiter the æther, and by Juno the air, called his sister and wife, because of the near conjunction between them. Balbus the Stoic gives the same account in Cicero *De Nat. Deorum, lib. ii. cap. 26.* St. Austin acquaints us, that the same thing was said by the Pagans in his time. *De Civit. Dei, lib. iii. cap. 10. p. 74.* And this is not easily reconcilable to the notion of Jupiter Capitolinus’ being the one supreme God. That learned Father very well shows the confusion and self-contradiction of Varro and others on this head. *Ibid. lib. vii. c. 16. p. 134, and c. 28. p. 141.*

"tions of one supreme Deity, according to its several attributes and manifestations."\* Not to examine this hypothesis at present, I would observe that the Doctor calls it "the recondite and arcane theology of the Pagans," where he plainly intimates that whatever notions some speculative men might entertain of this matter, this theology was not known among the people. Nor was it intended they should know it. They regarded them as distinct deities, and adored them as such. The same learned writer acknowledges that "the fabulous theology, both of the Greeks and Romans, did not only generate all the other gods, but even Jupiter himself also, their supreme numen, assigning him both a father and mother, a grandfather and grandmother. And though the Romans did not plainly adopt this into their civil theology, yet are they taxed by St. Austin for suffering the statue of Jupiter's nurse to be kept in the Capitol for a religious monument."† The Doctor adds that "this was connived at by the politicians, in a way of necessary compliance with the vulgar; it being extremely difficult for them to conceive such a living being or animal as was never made, and without a beginning."‡ He seems to me here to give up the cause, as far as it relates to the popular Pagan notion of Jupiter Capitolinus. The excuse he makes for the politicians and great men of the state, plainly shows how little was to be expected from them for bringing the people to a right sense of religion and the Deity. Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews, was governed by quite different and far nobler principles. Having a divine commission, and animated by the Spirit of God, he was above the mean interested views of hu-

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\* Intel. Syst. chap. iv. sect. 27. p. 550.

† St. Austin observes properly on this occasion, that by this they gave testimony to Euhemerus, who, with the diligence of a historian, showed that the gods had been mortal men, "*Nonne adtestati sunt Euhemero, qui omnes tales deos, non fabulosam garrulitate sed historica diligentiam, homines fuisse mortalesque conscripsit?*" *De Civit. Dei*, lib. v. cap. 7. p. 119. A.

‡ Intel. Syst. chap. iv. sect. 32. p. 478.

man policy, and brought an illiterate people to just and sublime notions of the one true and eternal Divinity. I shall conclude what relates to Jupiter Capitolinus, the chief god of the political Roman state, with an observation of the very learned writer I have so often mentioned on this occasion. "The distinction of the natural and true theology from the civil and political, as it was acknowledged by all the ancient Greek philosophers, but most expressly by Antisthenes, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, so was it owned and much insisted upon both by Scævola, that famous Roman pontifex, and by Varro, that most learned antiquary; they both agreeing that the civil theology then established by the Roman laws was only the theology of the vulgar, but not the true."\*

I now proceed to observe further, that, in consequence of the mixing the history of their heroes with their theology, the Pagan mythologists often ascribed very scandalous actions to their gods; and particularly to Jupiter, whom they regarded as the chief of them. And at the same time that they applied to their deities the most divine titles and attributes, they represented them with all the passions and even vices of frail mortals. The passage in Terence is well known, where a young man encourages himself to a lewd action by the example of Jupiter, whom he there describes, as "shaking the highest heavens with the noise of his thunder—Qui templa cœli summa sonitu concutit."† Euripides puts this argument into the mouth of several of his speakers in his tragedies.‡ Plato observes, in his first book of laws, that the Cretans, who indulged themselves in the impure love of boys, pleaded the example of Jupiter and Ganymede.§ Many other

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\* Intel. Syst. chap. iv. sect. 32. p. 478.

† Terent. Eunuch. Act iii. Scene 4.

‡ See the passages referred to by the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moses, vol. I. book ii. sect. 4. p. 113. marg. note.

§ Plat. Oper. p. 569.

passages might be produced to the same purpose from ancient authors. And these things could not but have a very ill effect on the morals of the people, and were laid hold on by wicked and licentious persons, as giving sanction to their vices and debaucheries. It is not therefore without reason that Arnobius exclaims, “*Quis est mortalium tam pudicis moribus institutus, quem non ad hujusmodi farias deorum documenta, proritent?—What mortal is so chastely educated, whom such examples of the gods might not incite to the most libidinous excesses?*” Arnob. advers. Gent. lib. v. p. 178. edit. var. Lugd. Bat. The scandalous things related of the objects of their worship had a manifest tendency to expose religion to contempt. It is not therefore to be wondered at, that they sometimes spoke of their deities in a very disrespectful manner, and even of Jupiter himself. Thus Cicero, in his *Oratio pro Domo sua ad Pontifices*, speaks by way of gibe against Clodius, that he might call himself Jupiter, as having his sister for his wife.

Hence it was that the primitive Christians looked upon the name of Jupiter as so contaminated and polluted, that they would rather endure the greatest torments than make use of it to signify the one true God. There is a remarkable passage of Origen to this purpose, in his fifth book against Celsus, p. 262. edit. Cantabrig. where, speaking of the Christians, he declares, “that they rather chose to undergo any torments, than to acknowledge Jupiter to be God. For,” says he, “we do not look upon Jupiter and Sabaoth” (a Hebrew title, signifying the Lord of Hosts) “to be the same: nor do we look upon Jupiter to be a divinity at all; but a certain demon, who takes pleasure in being called by that name, and who is not friendly to man, nor to the true God. And if the Egyptians produce their Ammon to us, threatening us with death, we will rather die than call Ammon God.” And he expresses himself to the same purpose before, *ibid.* lib. i. p. 29, where he says, the Christians suffer death rather than call God Jupiter: and he mentions it as an

instance of their piety, that they would not apply any of those names, which were taken from the poetical fables, to the Creator of the universe; and that when they spoke of God they either indefinitely used the word God, or, with an addition, the Creator of all things, the Maker of heaven and earth. Lactantius also treats it as a great absurdity to give the name of Jupiter to the one true God.\*

The most plausible apology which is made for the Pagan polytheism is, that the one true God was worshipped under different titles and characters; that those which are reckoned distinct deities and objects of worship were really no more than different names or attributes of the one supreme Deity according to his various manifestations and effects. This was what the Stoics and some of the other philosophers maintained. There is a remarkable passage of Seneca to this purpose, *De Benefic.* lib. iv. cap. 7, 8. the purport of which is to show that God may be rightly called by any of the names he mentions, viz. Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the Thunderer, Jupiter Stator, Liber Pater, Hercules, Mercury, † Nature, Fate, and Fortune: for they are all the names of the same God, using his power in various ways. “*Omnia ejusdem Dei nomina sunt, variè utentis sua potestate.*” ‡ But we are to take this along with us, that as has been already hinted, Seneca takes God in the sense of the Stoics, who held that God is the soul of the world, or the world itself, considered as the one great animated being, of which all particular beings, and the things of nature, are the parts and members, or the powers and virtues: which several parts and powers of the universe they called by the names of particular popular deities, and gave

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\* *Divin. Instit.* lib. i. cap. 2. p. 63. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1660.

† When Seneca here says, “*Hunc et Liberum Patrem, et Herculem, ac Mercurium nostri putant;*” by *nostri* he does not mean the Roman people in general, as if they looked upon Jupiter, Liber Pater, Hercules, and Mercury, to be one and the same god; but the Stoics, of which sect he was, and whom he elsewhere calls *Stoici nostri*. *Epist.* 65.

‡ There is another passage of Seneca parallel to this. *Nat. Quæst.* lib. ii. cap. 45.

the name of God to the whole. To this they endeavour to accommodate the fables of the poetical mythology concerning Jupiter, and the other gods and goddesses; though many of their explications were so forced and unnatural, that they were often ridiculed by other Pagans on the account of them. Dr. Cudworth also produces a passage from Apuleius to show that all the Pagans throughout the world worshipped one supreme God under different names, and by various rites. "*Numen unicum multiformi specie, ritu vario, nomine multijugo, totus veneratur orbis.*" But not to insist upon it, that by God Apuleius seems there to understand universal nature, it must be observed, that he and several other Pagans who lived after the introduction of Christianity, made it their business to put a fair gloss upon the heathen superstition and idolatry, and in many instances disguised it. If this plea, be extended, as some of those apologists and refiners of Paganism pretended, to all the popular heathen deities in general, as if they were all no other than so many different names of the one supreme God, it would follow that they acknowledged and worshipped no hero deities at all; than which nothing can be more contrary to truth and fact. Accordingly these pretences of the philosophers made little impression upon the people, who had always been used to worship them as so many distinct personal divinities, and knew very well that the public religion regarded them as such. They were acquainted with the ancient traditions concerning them, and the actions ascribed to them by the poets and mythologists, to which many of their sacred rites referred, and on which they were founded. Tertullian puts the case very strongly to the Pagans, that they themselves were sensible that their gods had once been men. He appeals to their own consciences for the truth of this, and to their most ancient and authentic monuments.\* The learned

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\* "*Appellamus et provocamus a vobis ad conscientiam vestram: illa nos judicet, illa nos damnet, si potuerit negare omnes istos Deos vestros homines fuisse. Si et ipsa inficias ierit, de suis antiquitatum monumentis revinctur, ex quibus eos didicit testimonium perhibentibus ad hodiernum, et civitatibus in quibus nati sunt, et*

Dr. Cudworth, who seems very fond of the hypothesis of resolving the Pagan divinities into different names of the one supreme God, yet finds himself obliged to acknowledge that "herology," that is the history and worship of hero deities, "was inserted and complicated all along together with physiology, in the Paganic fables of their gods."\* Indeed these things were so blended together, that it was scarce possible to separate them, or to point out distinctly what belonged to the one, and what to the other: which produced a monstrous jumble in their religion and worship. And though this excellent writer concludes his account of the Egyptian theology with declaring his opinion that "a great part of the Egyptian polytheism was nothing else than the worshipping the one supreme God under many different names and notions, as of Hammon, Neith, Osiris, Isis, Serapis, Kneph," &c.;† yet it appears from the account he himself gives from Plutarch and others, that their most learned priests were far from being agreed in their notions of what was to be understood by Osiris, Isis, Serapis, &c. Some held them to be different names of the same deity, whom they supposed to be the whole animated world, but especially the sun: others held them to be different deities, or different powers presiding over the air, moisture, &c.: others gave historical and traditionary accounts of them as of persons that had formerly lived and reigned in Egypt. Porphyry makes Serapis to have been an evil demon.‡ And the Doctor himself, who takes notice of this, thinks it cannot be doubted that it was an evil demon that delivered oracles in the temple of Serapis, and affected to be worshipped as the supreme God.§

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"regionibus in quibus aliquid operati, operum vestigia reliquerunt, in quibus etiam sepulti demonstrantur." Tertul. Apolog. cap. 10. Oper. p. 11. Edit. Paris, 1675.

\* Intel. syst. chap. iv. sect. xiv. p. 239.

† Ibid. sect. 18. p. 352.

‡ Ap. Euseb. Præp. Evangel. lib. iv. cap. 23. p. 175.

§ Ubi supra, p. 351.



I do not deny that some of those, which passed for different deities, were probably at first only different names of God; but as idolatry increased among the nations, those different names came in process of time to be erected into different divinities, and were regarded and worshipped by the people as such. So that, instead of adoring the one supreme God under his various names and attributes, they turned those very names and attributes into so many distinct personal names of different gods and goddesses, whom they worshipped with different and sometimes with contrary rites: and thus made them an occasion of further polytheism and idolatry. "The several names of God," saith Dr. Cudworth, "were vulgarly spoken of, in Greece, as so many distinct deities."\* And the same may be observed concerning the Romans. He elsewhere acknowledgeth that "the vulgar probably did not understand that mystery of the Pagan theology; that many of their gods were nothing but several names and notions of the one supreme Deity, in its various manifestations and effects."† Lord Herbert himself, who hath used his utmost efforts to palliate the Pagan polytheism, and to show that they worshipped the one true God, the same that we Christians adore, under various names and attributes, yet owns, that what were at first only different names, in process of time, as superstition increased, came to be regarded and worshipped as different gods.‡ The same thing is observed by Mr. Sel-den, who says that, in the sacred hymns, the gods were invoked

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\* Intel. Syst. p. 260.

† Ibid. p. 447.

‡ His Lordship takes notice of the name of *Zeus sabbaius*, which was probably derived from the Hebrew *Sabaoth*, and was originally designed to signify God's supreme universal dominion, as he is the Lord of Hosts. He was worshipped by the Athenians; but it does not appear that, under this name, they intended to adore the one supreme Lord of the universe, but regarded him as a particular deity, and thus turned him into an idol. And accordingly Aristophanes inveighs against him as a strange and foreign divinity, which was lately introduced, and ought to be banished out of Greece. To this Cicero refers, *De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 15. p. 132.*

a variety of names and epithets ; because it was imagined that this variety of names was pleasing and honourable to men : but that afterwards these different names were accounted worshipped as different divinities. \* Thus idolatry and polytheism was making continual advances, even as the nation grew in learning and politeness.

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\* Seld. De Diis Syris, Proleg. cap. iii. p. 55, 56. Edit. Lips.

## CHAP. V.

*Farther progress of the heathen polytheism. The symbols and images of the gods turned into gods themselves. The physiology of the Pagans another source of idolatry. They made gods and goddesses of the things of nature, and parts of the universe, and of whatsoever was useful to mankind. The qualities and affections of the mind, and accidents of life, and even evil qualities and accidents were deified, and had divine honours rendered to them. The most refined Pagans agreed, according to Dr. Cudworth, in crumbling the Deity into several parts, and multiplying it into many gods. They supposed God to be in a manner all things, and therefore to be worshipped in every thing. Divine honours were paid to evil beings acknowledged to be such. The Egyptian idolatry considered.*

As the different names, so also the different symbols invented and made use of to denote the Divinity, came also to be worshipped as gods: such as fire among the Chaldeans, the cow and bull among the Egyptians. And it is not improbable, that the other animal gods worshipped by the Egyptians, the sheep, goat, hawk, ibis, ichneumon, crocodile, cat, dog, &c. were at first designed, according to the wisdom which then obtained, as symbols and hieroglyphical characters of the supreme Deity, or some of his attributes, or, as the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moses supposes, they were marks of their elementary gods and heroes.\* But afterwards they worshipped and deified the symbols themselves, and thereby fell into the most gross and stupid idolatry, which exposed them to the ridicule of other Pagans.

The same may be observed concerning the images which were erected to their deities, and were supposed to have divine powers residing in them. These very images became gods, and were worshipped as such, and had divine honours rendered to them. And this added mightily to the multitude of their gods. Plutarch blames the Grecians for calling the pictures of the gods, and their statues of brass and stone, gods: whereas they ought only to have called them the images of the gods.† How far this was carried among the Athenians, who were accounted the most knowing as well as the most religious

\* Div. Leg. of Moses, vol. I. part. ii. p. 298. 4th edit.

† Plut. De Isid. et Osir. oper. tom. II. p. 379. Edit. Francof.

people in the heathen world, appears from a remarkable story recorded by Laërtius.\* The philosopher Stilpo of Megara was brought before the venerable tribunal of the Areopagus, at Athens, for saying that the statue of Minerva, which was made by Phidias, was not a god; and, though he endeavoured to defend himself by alleging that it was not a god but a goddess, he was ordered by that court, who were not satisfied with this evasion, to depart the city. †

Their physiology, as they managed it, was another fruitful source of polytheism. The first physiologists, or they who first began to philosophize on the nature of things, being for the most part poets, disguised the simple original tradition of the creation of the world by allegorical descriptions of the nature and origin of things. They turned the things of nature and parts of the universe into allegorical persons, and spoke of them as so many distinct divinities: and at the same time they mixed these physical fables and allegories with the disguised traditionary accounts of their ancient heroes. Hence it came to pass, that, as hath been observed by the learned, and particularly by Dr. Cudworth, their cosmogonia, or account of the origin or formation of the world, became also a theogonia, or account of the generation of the gods: in which there was a monstrous confusion of gods, demons, and the things of nature personified. Such was the theogonia of Hesiod. And thus was the number of their gods and goddesses strangely multiplied. Balbus, in Cicero, after having taken notice of the deified heroes, next mentions the physiological fables and allegories, which, being clothed with human forms, furnished fables to the poets, and filled human life with all manner of superstition. “*Alia quoque ex ratione, et quidem physicâ,*

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\* Laërt. lib. ii. segm. 116.

† This is not to be understood, as if the heathens looked upon the very images, in themselves considered, to be gods: for who but a fool, says Celsus, can imagine those images to be real gods? But they believed that the gods were both represented by them, and really present in them, and that therefore they ought to be the objects of divine worship. See Orig. cont. Cels. lib. vii. and Arnobius, lib. vi.

“ magna effluxit multitudo deorum, qui induti specie humanâ,  
 “ fabulas poetis suppeditaverunt, humanam autem vitam su—  
 “ perstitutione omni refercerunt.”\* And in this many of the phi—  
 losophers were no less to be blamed than the poets. For they  
 also deified the things of nature, and the several parts of the  
 universe, which some of them regarded as the symbols, others  
 as real parts and members, of the Divinity.

Upon the same principles, divinity came to be ascribed to  
 whatever was useful in human life. Velleius, in Cicero, in—  
 forms us that Perseus, who had been an auditor and disciple of  
 Zeno, said, that both the inventors of things which were of  
 great utility in life were accounted gods, and even the things  
 themselves which were salutary and beneficial were called by  
 the names of the gods.† Cotta says the same thing of Prodi—  
 cus Chius, and represents him as thereby taking away all re—  
 ligion.‡ Plutarch also passes a severe censure upon those, as  
 causing absurd and impious opinions, who gave the name of  
 gods to things insensible and inanimate, and which the gods  
 have provided for the use of mankind; as when they call wine  
 Bacchus, and fire Vulcan; which he thinks is as absurd, as if  
 men should take the sails and ropes for the master of the  
 ship, or the potions and medicines for the physician.§ But  
 Balbus, who is the representative of the Stoics, in Cicero, and  
 who seems to speak Cicero’s own sentiments, is of a different  
 opinion. He thinks it was wisely ordered, both by the wisest  
 men among the Greeks, and by the ancient Romans, that  
 whatever was of great advantage to human life, and which they  
 looked upon to be owing to the divine goodness towards man—

\* De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 24. p. 164. Edit. Davis. 2.

† Ibid. lib. i. cap. 15. p. 40.

‡ Ibid. cap. 42. p. 102. This was at length carried so far, that there was scarce  
 any thing which was of use in human life, but had divine honours ascribed to it, the  
 meanest things not excepted, such as the crepitus ventris; because, if parted with,  
 it tended to the health of the body, and might be hurtful if suppressed. Seld.  
 De Diis Syris, Proleg. cap. 5. p. 61. Edit. Lips. Orig. cont. Cels. lib. v. p. 255.

§ De Is. et Osir. Oper. tom. II. p. 377. E.

kind, should be called by the name of the god from whom it came, as when we call corn Ceres, and wine Bacchus: and that whenever there is any great force or virtue in any thing; it is proper that that very thing should be called god.\* Thus did these wise men contrive to find out plausible pretences, in their great wisdom, for giving that honour to the works themselves, which should have been appropriated to God the glorious author; and, instead of being led by his gifts bestowed upon them to render due acknowledgements to him, the sovereign Donor, they turned those very gifts into deities.

Balbus goes on, in the place now referred to, to mention the temples which were erected to mind, faith, virtue, health, concord, honour, victory, liberty; and that because the force of these things was so great, that it could not be governed without a god, the thing itself obtained the name of god. “*Quarum omnium rerum quia vis erat tanta, ut sine Deo regi non possit, ipsa res Deorum nomen obtinuit.*” †

And this leads to another observation, which shows the strong bent the heathens had to polytheism. The qualities and affections of rational beings, and even the accidents which relate to them, were made persons of, and turned into deities; and as such had divine worship paid them. And this honour was rendered not only to qualities and accidents that were good and useful, but to those that were bad and hurtful: “So great was the error,” saith Cotta, in Cicero, “that even to pernicious things not only was the name of gods attributed, but holy rites were instituted.—*Tantus error fuit, ut perniciosis etiam rebus, non modo Deorum nomen tribueretur, sed etiam sacra constituerentur.*” And he instances, in the temple erected at Rome to the fever, and an altar to evil fortune. ‡ And he had before observed that tempests were deified and consecrated by the Roman people; § an ancient monument of which was dug up, in the last century, at the Porta Capena. || Yea, even the names of vicious things were

\* De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 23. p. 161.

† Ibid. p. 162.

‡ Ibid. lib. iii. cap. 25. p. 314.

§ Ibid. cap. 20. p. 297.

|| Seld. De Diis Syris, Proleg. cap. iii. p. 59.

consecrated; as of lust and pleasure. “Cupidinis et voluptatis, et lubentinae veneris, vocabula consecrata sunt, vitiorum rerum, neque naturalium.”\* To this St Austin refers, De Civit. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 8. where he mentions the temple of Volupia, the goddess of pleasure, so called from *voluptas*, pleasure; and of Libentina, the goddess of lust, so called from *libido*, lust. Varro mentions the same goddesses, and gives the same etymology of their names. And the Athenians, by the advice of Epimenides, who passed among them for a great diviner and prophet, erected a temple to contumely and impudence; “ὕβρις καὶ ἀναιδεια.” Cicero, who takes notice of this in his second book of Laws, cap. xi. p. 116, 117, passes a just censure upon it, and condemns the erecting temples and altars to things hurtful and vicious. But he there approves the erecting temples to virtuous affections and qualities, as also to things that are desirable, as health, honour, victory, &c. though, in his third book De Natura Deorum, cap. xxiv. he, in the person of Cotta, represents it as absurd to make deities of the qualities that are in us, or of the events which befall us. And Pliny says, “Innumeros quidem [deos] credere, atque etiam ex virtutibus vitiisque hominum, ut pudicitiam, concordiam, mentem, spem, honorem, clementiam, fidem, aut (ut Democrito placet) duos omnino, potius nam et beneficium, majorem ad socordiam accedit.” Hist. Naturalis, lib. ii. cap. 7.

Upon the whole, there was scarce any thing in nature, but what some or other of the heathens worshipped and made a god of. † Lord Herbert, who does all he can to justify or excuse the Pagan idolatry and polytheism, yet concludes the tenth chapter of his book De Religione Gentilium, with observing that the gentiles did not only worship the whole

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\* De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. 23. p. 162.

† St. Austin has given a long list of heathen deities, and the offices assigned to them, from Varro, De Civit. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 8. And a still larger catalogue of them, ibid. cap. 11. et cap. 16. et cap. 21. The reader may also see a greater number of them mentioned by Arnobius adversus Gentes, lib. iv. p. 128, et seq.

world taken together, but its parts, yea even its particles or smaller parts; thinking it unbecoming, that some of the more eminent parts of him whom they regarded as God should be worshipped, and other parts neglected. And therefore they judged that it would be a base and impious thing to render worship to this or that star or element, and reject the others as vile and worthless. And, in worshipping the world as consisting of those parts, they thought they worshipped the supreme God in the best image of the Divinity.\*

Thus there was a universal idolatry introduced and supported under various pretences, and practised not only by the vulgar, but by those that put on the appearance of wisdom and philosophy. I shall here subjoin some observations of the very learned Dr. Cudworth, relating to this matter; and I the rather choose to do this, both because he is known to have searched, with great learning and diligence, into the depths of the Pagan theology; and because he cannot be reasonably suspected of a design to aggravate the charge against them: since, on the contrary, he appears to have been strongly inclined to represent the state of the heathen world in the most favourable light.

“It cannot be denied,” saith that excellent author, “that the Pagans, did in some sense or other, deify, or theologize all the parts of the world, or things of nature.” And again, “In their theologizing of physiology, and deifying the things of nature and parts of the world, they did accordingly call every thing by the name of God, and God by the name of every thing.”† To the same purpose he expresseth himself, in several other places. And can any thing be more dishonourable to the Deity, more unworthy of his Divine Majesty, or have a worse effect on religion, than thus, in their worship, to confound God and the creature, instead of rendering him that singular honour and adoration which his own infinite perfections and his unparalleled dignity justly demand from us?

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\* De Relig. Gentil. p. 133, 134. Edit. Amstel. 8vo. 1700.

† Intel. Syst. p. 507, 515.



The same celebrated writer observes that "the Pagans in general, even the most refined of them, agreed in these two things; first, in breaking and crumbling the one simple Deity, and multiplying it into many gods, or parcelling it out into several particular notions, according to its several powers and virtues; and, then, in theologizing the whole world, and deifying the natures of things, accidents, and inanimate bodies. They supposing God to pervade all things, and himself to be in a manner all things."\* And that therefore he might be worshipped in every thing. This is one remarkable instance, among many which might be mentioned, of the extravagancies to which human reason is subject; and how apt those are who have the highest opinion of their own wisdom, when left to themselves, to draw wrong conclusions from the best principles. So the heathens did, from the notion of God's universal presence, and his providence, as extended to all his works. With respect to what Dr. Cudworth calls their crumbling the one simple Deity into parts, he produces a remarkable passage from Pliny, *Nat. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 7.* "*Fragilis et laboriosa mortalitas, in partes ita digessit, infirmitatis suæ memor, ut in portionibus quisque coleret, quo maxime indigeret.*" Which he translates thus; "Frail and toilsome mortality has thus broken and crumbled the Deity into parts, mindful of its own infirmity, that so every one, by parcels and pieces, might worship that in God which himself stands most in need of."

To what has been offered concerning the Pagan idolatry, might be added the worship of demons or genii, which prevailed mightily in the heathen world. These were accounted a middle kind of beings, inferior to the celestial gods, but superior to men. There were supposed to be vast numbers of them, of different kinds, to all of whom they thought religious worship was due. But not to insist upon this at

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\* *Intel. Syst.* p. 532, 533.

present, I would observe that it was a usual thing among the heathens to worship evil beings, and to render them religious honours, that they might not hurt them. Plutarch, *De Placitis Philosophorum*, having distributed the whole doctrine relating to the worship of the gods into seven parts, takes notice, in the second and third place, that they distinguished their gods into those that were favourable and beneficial to mankind, such as Jupiter, Juno, Mercury, Ceres, and those that were hurtful, such as the Diræ, Furies, and Mars, whom, as being cruel and violent, they endeavoured to appease and conciliate by sacred rites.\* And, in his treatise, *De Iside et Osiride*, he cites, with approbation, the opinion of Xenocrates, who, speaking of unlucky days and festivals, which were celebrated by scourgings, beatings, lamentations, fastings, ill-boding words, and obscene expressions, would not allow that they were pleasing or agreeable to the gods, or good demons; but that there were in the air about us certain great and powerful natures, of a cross and morose temper, which take pleasure in those things, and having obtained them do no further mischief.† And he observes that the Egyptians were wont, on some occasions, to worship Typhon, whom they looked upon to be an evil power, with certain sacrifices, in order to appease and console him; though there were solemnities, in which they reproached and cursed him.‡ And, in his treatise, *De Oraculorum Defectu*, he makes mention of certain festivals and sacrifices, in which, among the sacred rites, were reckoned the eating raw flesh, the tearing of their flesh or members, διασπάσιμοι, (for this seems to be the meaning of it, by comparing it with Porphyr. *De Abstinencia*, lib. ii. sect. 45.) doleful lamentations, obscene words, furious ravings, &c. These, he thinks, were instituted for pleasing evil and malignant demons, and averting their

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\* Plutarch. Oper. tom. II. p. 880. Edit. Francof. 1620.

† Plut. ubi supra, p. 361. B.

‡ Ibid. p. 362. E.

wrath.\* The same judgment he passes upon human sacrifices; which, as I shall have occasion to show, were very generally offered in the Pagan world, even to those that were accounted their principal deities. Porphyry, that zealous and able advocate for Paganism, affirms that there are malevolent and noxious demons, who dwell in the spaces near the earth. He represents them as the authors of all the calamities which infest mankind, and that there is no kind of mischief which they are not ready to attempt: that it is their property to lie: and that they endeavour to turn men off from right thoughts of the gods, and to draw their regards to themselves, having an ambition to be accounted gods: and that the chief and most powerful among them covets to be esteemed the greatest or the supreme god.† And he plainly intimates that men generally rendered them religious worship. He says that cities found it necessary to appease and humour them by prayers and sacrifices: it being in the power of those demons to bestow riches, and external things relating to the body; and he gives it as the opinion of the theologues, that it is necessary for those who are attached to these external goods, and cannot as yet restrain and govern their appetites, to endeavour to avert the wrath and power of these demons, otherwise they shall never be free from troubles and vexations.‡ He had before represented it as a persuasion which generally obtained concerning all the demons, whether good or bad, and whether worshipped under particular names or not, that they will grow angry and hurt men, if they are neglected, and have not due honour and worship paid them; and, on the other hand, will do good to those who endeavour to gratify them, by offering to them prayers, supplications, and sacrifices. And he says that the man that is studious of piety does not sacrifice any thing which has life, that is, any animal, to the gods, but to demons and

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\* Plut. p. 417. C. D.

† Porphyr. De Abstin. lib. ii. sect. 39, 40, 42. p. 83, 84. Edit. Cantabrig. 1655.—

‡ Ibid. sect. 43. p. 86, 87.

other beings, both to the good and even to the bad. “Ὁ εὐσεβείας φροντίζων ὡς θεῶς μὲν οὐ θύεται ἑμψυχον οὐδὲν δαίμοσι δὲ καὶ ἄλλοις ἦτοι ἀγαθοῖς ἢ καὶ φαύλοις.”\* Where he supposes that a pious man will worship and offer sacrifices to evil demons as well as good beings. The same Porphyry, as cited by Eusebius, looked upon Hecate, a goddess had in great veneration among the Pagans (as appears from Hesiodi Theogonia, vers. 410. et. seq. and Potter’s Antiquities of Greece, vol. i. p. 351.) to be an evil demon; and that Serapis, the great Egyptian deity, who, Plutarch tells us, was the common god of all the Egyptians, and the same with Osiris,† was the chief or prince of evil demons; and that many of those who delivered oracles were so.‡ Thus we have the testimony of a very eminent Pagan philosopher, and who was a bitter enemy to Christianity, to the truth of what St. Paul declares, that “the things which the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to devils, (to demons, and even evil ones) and not to God.” 1 Cor. x. 20. And if this was true, even of the polite and civilized heathens within the limits of the Roman empire, we are the less to be surprised at the accounts which are given us by authors of good credit, of the worship that has been paid to evil beings in some other parts of the world. We are told concerning the ancient Zabians, that they worshipped him whom they called Sammael, and whom they regarded as an evil spirit, and the prince of the demons.§ The Persians worshipped Arimanius, whom they looked upon to be an evil principle. The like account is given of the people of Pegu, Decan, Narsinga, and other places in the East Indies. It is said also, that evil spirits are worshipped in Japan, and in the islands of Formosa, Ceylon, and Madagascar. The same thing is related of the Hottentots, and other African nations. The like practice obtained in several parts of America, par-

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\* Porphyr. De Abstin. lib. ii. sect. 36, 37. p. 80, 81.

† Plut. De Isid. et Osir. Oper. tom. II. p. 362.

‡ Apud Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. iv. cap. 22, 23. p. 174, 175.

§ Hottinger Hist. Oriental. lib. i. cap. 8. and Stanley’s History of Philos. p. 1065.

ticularly among the ancient inhabitants of Canada, Terra Firma, Brasil, and Chili. Most of these nations believe a god or gods, and some of them one supreme God, and that he is good: and yet they worship an evil being or beings, considered as such, from a fear of being otherwise hurt and destroyed by them. This undoubtedly shows that the Pagan ideas of a Deity and a providence were extremely defective and imperfect; for, if they had right notions of either, they must have been convinced, that to worship evil beings is to offer the greatest indignity to an infinitely wise, powerful, and good God, as if he were not able to protect his faithful servants and worshippers against their power and malice. But the Christian revelation teacheth us to form nobler notions. Happy those that know how to value and improve so great an advantage!\*

Some hints were given above of the idolatry of the ancient Egyptians: but it may not be improper here to take a more distinct notice of it. The Egyptians were a nation anciently very famous for their wisdom and knowledge. Herodotus declares that they "were esteemed to be the wisest of mankind," and that "in wisdom they excelled all other mortals." Lib. ii. cap. 16. et 121. From Egypt, as was before observed, Greece originally derived her science and theology. Diodorus affirms that most of those among the Greeks, who were honoured for their understanding and knowledge, several of whom he particularly mentions, did in ancient times resort to Egypt, that they might be acquainted with the laws and learning of the Egyptians. Yet no nation became more deeply immersed in idolatry. They not only paid divine honours to the ibis and ichneumon, which were useful to them, but to the crocodile, the dog, cat, and many other animals.†

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\* The reader may find the instances here referred to confirmed by proper authorities in Millar's History of the Propagation of Christianity, vol. II. chap. 7.

† They are also charged with worshipping plants, such as onions, garlick, &c. Hence Juvenal derides them as having their gods growing in their gardens. But Mr. Goguet, in his book *De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, &c.* tom. I. p. 730, 731. observes that the most ancient and approved writers, who give any account

Some modern writers have affected not to believe that so wise a nation could be guilty of an idolatry so stupid. But there is scarce any thing in all antiquity that comes to us better attested. They were on this account the objects of ridicule to other Pagan nations. See to this purpose, Cicero De Nat. Deorum, lib. i. cap. 16 et 29, et lib. iii. cap. 15. See also a passage of the poet Anaxandrides, in Athen. Deipnosoph. lib. vii. According to Diodorus, it was hard to make those who had not been witnesses of it, to believe the extravagancies the Egyptians were guilty of, with regard to their sacred animals.\* And Philo, who lived among them, charges them with worshipping dogs, lions, wolves, crocodiles, and many other animals, both terrestrial and aquatick. And he says that all strangers who came into Egypt were wont to laugh at them; and the more sensible travellers beheld them with astonishment and pity.† Plutarch expressly “says that the greater part of the Egyptians—*Διγνατίων οἱ πολλοί*, worship—“ping the animals themselves—*αὐτὰ ζῶα θεραπειοῦντες;*” thereby not only exposed their sacred ceremonies and worship to derision and contempt, but gave occasion to horrid conceptions, producing, in persons of weak and simple minds, an extravagance of superstition, and precipitating others of more subtle and daring spirits into atheistical and brutish opinions.‡ An

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of the affairs or customs of Egypt, such as Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, make no mention of this singular superstition, which they would not have omitted, if they had known that the Egyptians practised it. He thinks Juvenal is the first that has mentioned it. Lucian has also taken notice of it in his Jupiter Tragedy. These authors have been followed by others; but, considering the satirical turn for which they are both so remarkable, he thinks they are not much to be depended upon.

\* Diod. Sic. lib. i. cap. 84.

† Philo De Decal. Oper. p. 755. E.

‡ Plut. De Isid. et Osir. Oper. tom. II. p. 379. D. E. But from these must be excepted the inhabitants of Thebais; if what the same author informs us of be true, that when the other Egyptians paid their proportion of the taxes and contributions, appointed by the laws, towards maintaining the sacred animals, the inhabitants of Thebais alone did not pay any thing, as thinking there is no mortal god; but worship him whom they call Kneph, as being unbegotten or unmade, and immortal. Ibid. p. 359. D.

ingenious modern author, who is loath to believe what is said of the Egyptian idolatry, says, by way of apology for them, that "the Egyptians did not adore these things without ascribing certain divine virtues to them, or considering them as symbols of some invisible power."\* But, if it were so, it furnishes a remarkable instance of the vanity of human wisdom, if left to itself in matters of religion. For the symbols and hieroglyphics, upon which the wise men of Egypt so much valued themselves, and in which such profound wisdom and science was supposed to be contained, proved to be an occasion of leading the people into the most absurd and senseless idolatry; to which they continued inviolably attached, notwithstanding all the ridicule cast upon them for it by other nations. Cotta, in Cicero, observes that they showed a greater regard to the beasts which they worshipped, than other nations did to their most holy temples and images: that there had been many instances of temples spoiled and images of the gods taken away out of the most holy places by the Romans: but it had never been heard of, that a crocodile, an ibis, or a cat, had been ill treated by the Egyptians. "Firmiores videas apud eos opiniones de bestiis quibusdam, quam apud nos de sanctissimis templis et simulacris deorum. Etenim fana multa expoliata, et simulacra deorum de locis sanctissimis ablata vidimus a nostris; at verò ne fandum quidem auditum est, crocodilum, aut ibin, aut felem violatum ab Egyptiis." *De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 29.* See also *Tuscul. Disput. lib. v. cap. 27.*

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\* Chevalier Ramsay's *Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*, vol. II.—p. 53.

## CHAP. VI.

*The Pagan theology distributed by Varro into three different kinds: the poetical or fabulous, the civil, and the philosophical. The poetical or fabulous theology considered. The pretence, that we ought not to judge of the Pagan religion by the poetical mythology, examined. It is shown that the popular religion and worship was in a great measure founded upon that mythology, which ran through the whole of their religion, and was of great authority with the people.*

VARRO, who was accounted the most learned of the Romans, speaks of three different kinds of theology among them: the mythical or fabulous, the physical or natural, and the civil or popular. The first is that of the poets; the second that of the philosophers; the third is that which is established by public authority and the laws, and which is in use among the people.\* The famous Roman pontiff and lawyer Scævola makes the same distinction.† So also does Plutarch.‡

It will be proper, in order to form a right judgment of the state of religion among the Pagans, to take a view of these different kinds of theology.

As to the mythical or fabulous theology, which was that of the poets, it is condemned in strong terms both by Scævola and Varro. The former passes this just censure upon it, that it was nugatory, and that in it many unworthy things were feigned concerning the gods. And particularly he observes that "they make one god steal, another to commit adultery; they represent three goddesses contending for the prize of beauty, and that two of them, in revenge for its being adjudged to Venus, subverted Troy; that Jupiter himself was converted into a bull or a swan, that he might debauch some woman he had a fancy for; that a goddess married a man; that Saturn devoured his own children; and, in fine, nothing can be imagined so monstrous or so vicious, but it

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\* Apud Augustin. De Civit. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 5.

† Ibid. lib. iv. cap. 27.

‡ De Placit. Philos. lib. i. cap. 6. Oper. tom. II. p. 880. A.



“may be found in the fables attributed to the gods, however foreign to their nature.—Sic deos deformant, ut nec bonis hominibus comparentur; cum alium faciunt furari, alium adulterare; tres inter se deas certasse de præmio pulchritudinis, victas duas a Venere Trojam evertisse; Jovem ipsum converti in bovem aut cygnum, ut cum aliqua concumbat; deam homini nubere; Saturnum liberos devorare: nihil denique posse confingi miraculorum atque vitiorum quod non ibi reperiat, atque ab deorum natura longè absit.”\* Varro passes the same judgment upon the fabulous poetical theology which Scævola did. And, after mentioning some of the same absurdities, and others of the like kind, he concludes with saying that “all things are attributed to the gods, which men, and even the vilest and worst of men, could be guilty of.—Omnia diis attribuuntur, quæ non modo in hominem, sed etiam quæ in contemptissimum hominem cadere possunt.”† And long before them Plato had accused Hesiod, as guilty of the greatest falsehood, and that in a matter of the utmost importance, when he mentions such wicked things to have been perpetrated by Cœlus, and his son Saturn; which, he thinks, if true, ought not to have been mentioned, especially to inconsiderate and young persons, but to have been buried in silence, or communicated only to a few. He pronounces these fables to be pernicious, and not fit to be heard in a well-ordered commonwealth. And afterwards mentioning what Homer says of the quarrel between Jupiter and Juno, and Vulcan’s being hurled down by Jupiter from heaven for taking Juno’s part, as also what the same poet relates concerning the battles and contentions of the gods, he declares that these stories are not to be admitted, whether they are pretended to have a hidden allegorical meaning or not. See his second book *De Republica*, at the latter end.‡ Cicero also passes a severe censure upon the poetical fables.§

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\* Augustin De. Civ. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 27. p. 84. E. Ed. Rened.

† Ibid. lib. vi. cap. 5. p. 116. E.

‡ Plat. Oper. Ficin. p. 429, 430. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

§ De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 16. et lib. ii. cap. 28.

Considering this and other passages to the same purpose, which occur in some of the most eminent Pagan writers, it may be looked upon as an unfair thing to judge of the ancient religion of the heathens by the writings of the poets and mythologists. And accordingly they, who endeavour to represent that religion in the most advantageous light, are for entirely discarding the poetical mythology. This is Lord Herbert's scheme. He mightily inveighs against the poets, as having confounded and polluted the heathen theology, and left nothing sound or pure in their history or religion; and that therefore no regard is to be had to them in this matter.\*

And yet certain it is, that, in examining into the religion of the ancient Gentiles, the poetical mythology, notwithstanding the censures so freely bestowed upon it, must necessarily be considered. It may justly be affirmed that the writings of the poets tend to give us the truest idea of the Pagan religion, as it obtained even among the polite and learned nations of Greece and Rome, and as it was established by public authority. Whosoever will carefully consult the account given by Potter, in his excellent antiquities of Greece, of the numerous sacred festivals and rites observed and celebrated in Greece, and especially at Athens, will find that they are almost all founded upon the fables of the poetical mythology.† The same may be said of many of those observed by the ancient Romans.

The poets, as Dr. Cudworth observes, were the prophets of the Pagans, and pretended to a kind of divine inspiration. And, though he treats them as the great depravers of the Pa-

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\* "Licentiâ quippe poeticâ usi musarum alumni, ita omnia temerabant, ut quid ad alterutras spectet partes nemo facile invenerit.—Facessant igitur, et ab ipsa gentilium theologiâ exulent poetæ; non solum quippe veras heroum historias, ex fabularum interpolatione suspectas, ne dicam falsas, etiam mortalium credulissimis rediderunt: sed et fabulas hæc mysticis involutisque quibusdam, circa cælum, astræ et elementa doctrinis, admiscentes, nihil integrum, nihil sanum, vel in historia vel in ipsa religione reliquere." Herb. De Relig. Gentil. cap. xi. p. 135. Edit. Amstel. 8vo.

† See Potter's Antiquities, vol. I. lib. 2. chap. 20. from p. 326. to p. 407.

gan theology, yet he says "they imbued the minds of the vulgar with a certain sense of religion, and the notions of morality."\* And that "we cannot make a better judgment concerning the vulgar and generality of the ancient Pagans, than from the poets and mythologists, who were the chief instructors of them."† And to this purpose he observes that Aristotle, in his Politics, lib. viii. cap. 5. writing of music, judgeth of men's opinions concerning the gods by the poets. "We may learn," says Aristotle "what opinion men have of the gods from hence, because the poets never bring in Jupiter singing, or playing on an instrument." Varro tells us, that "with regard to what relates to the generation of the gods, the people were more inclined to the poets than to the natural philosophers: and that therefore their ancestors, the ancient Romans, believed the sexes and generations, and marriages of the gods."‡ And though Plato, in the passage above referred to, in the second book of his Republic, disapproves the fables of the poets and mythologists, even if they should be allegorically interpreted, yet, such was the authority of those fables and traditions, that in his Timæus, one of his best and latest treatises, he dares not openly reject them. He declines treating of the generation of the gods or demons, under pretence that these things were too high for him. And then adds, "We are to believe those who before had given an account of these things, as being sprung from the gods, as they themselves declare, and who therefore must have known their own progenitors. For" says he, "it is impossible not to believe the sons of the gods, though they give no necessary or probable reasons for what they say. But it becomes us, following what the law directs, *προμύνοις τῷ νόμῳ*, to give them credit, as speaking of their own proper affairs." And then he goes on to men-

\* Intel. Syst. p. 355. † Ibid. p. 448.

‡ "Dicit Varro de generationibus deorum magis ad poetas quam ad physicos fuisse populos inclinator, et ideo et sexum et generationes deorum, majores suos id est veteres credidisse Romanos, et eorum constituisse conjugia." Ap. Augustin. C. D. lib. iv. cap. 32. p. 88.

tion some of the things delivered in Hesiod's *Theogonia*. Plato seems here to insinuate the true reason why he did not think fit to reject those traditions. It is because they were favoured and authorized by the laws.

The same celebrated philosopher, in his *Ion*, in the person of Socrates, gives such an account of the poets, as must needs tend greatly to strengthen their authority with the people. His design there is to show that poetry, and the interpretation of it, is not merely the effect of art or industry, but owing to a kind of divine afflatus. "The poet cannot sing," says he, "except he be full of God, and carried out of himself." And again, "they do not say these things by art, but by a divine power.—Οὐ γὰρ τεχνῇ ταῦτα λέγουσιν ἀλλὰ θεῶν δυνάμει:" or, as he had expressed it just before, *θεῶν μοίρα*: that "God uses them as his ministers, as he does the deliverers of oracles and divine prophets, that we hearing them might know that it is not they themselves who speak those excellent things, since they have not then the use of their understanding, but that it is God that speaks by them; and that the poets are no other than the interpreters of the gods, *Οἱ δὲ πάντα οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ ἱεμανεῖς εἰσι τῶν θεῶν*—whilst they are thus inspired, by whatever god they are possessed."\* And Socrates, in his apology to his judges, gives the same idea of poetry and the poets. He represents them, as acting, not by their own wisdom, but by a certain divine instinct or afflatus, like the prophets of God and deliverers of oracles—"ὥσπερ οἱ θεομάντιες καὶ οἱ χρησμοφόροι."†

Many passages might be quoted from eminent Pagan writers, expressing their approbation of the poets, and their theology. A passage was cited above from Dio Chrysostomus, *Orat.* 36. in which he plainly intimates the great authority which the poets and their theology had with the people; and that it was to the Jupiter of the poets that men every

\* Plat. *Oper.* p. 145. F. G.

† Ibid. p. 360. G.

where erected altars and paid their devotions. Max. Tyrius, speaking of Homer's representations of the deities,<sup>†</sup> says that "the ignorant man hears them as fables, but the philosopher "as realities," and he mentions it to his praise, that "to Homer no part of the world is without a God, nor destitute of a ruler, or without government: but all things are full of divine names, and a divine art."\* And Proclus, in Tim. Plat. speaking of the divine Homer, as he calls him, saith, that "throughout all his poetry, he praises Jupiter as the highest of all rulers, and the father of gods and men; and attributes all demiurgical notions to him."<sup>‡</sup>

The Stoics, who were the most rigid sect of Pagan philosophers, were not for rejecting the poetical fables; but endeavoured to explain them in an allegorical way. Zeno, as Velleius in Cicero observes, in interpreting Hesiod's Theogonia, attributed the names of Jupiter, Juno, and Vesta, to natural and inanimate things.<sup>‡</sup> And Cotta upbraids the Stoics, that, instead of confuting those fables, they confirmed them by their interpretations. "Vestri autem," says he to Balbus the Stoic, "non modo hæc non refellunt, verum etiam confirmant, interpretando quorsum quidque pertineat."<sup>§</sup> He ridicules them for taking a great deal of pains to little purpose, in endeavouring to give reasons for fictitious fables, as if there was much wisdom contained in them: as also for their etymological accounts of the names of the gods: and he intimates that the pains they took to explain these things showed that the accounts they gave were forced, and contrary to the ge-

\* Max. Tyr. Dissert. 16. p. 198. Edit. Oxon. 1677.

† Ap. Cudw. Intel. Syst. p. 360. One part of the charge advanced against the poets by Dr. Cudworth and others is, "that they personated the several inanimate parts of the world, and things of nature, which produced a number of gods and goddesses." But this charge lies equally against some of the most celebrated philosophers; for they also deified the things of nature, and the parts of the world. And this was, by that learned writer's own acknowledgment, the prevailing philosophy.

‡ De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 14. p. 38.

§ Ibid. lib. iii. cap. 23. p. 312.

neral opinion. “*Magnam molestiam suscepit et minimè necessariam primus Zeno, post Cleanthes, deinde Chrysippus, commentitiarum fabularum reddere rationem: vocabulorum, car quique ita appellati sint, causas explicare. Quod cum facitis, illud profectò confitemini, longè aliter se rem habere, atque hominum opinio sit.*”\*

How much the poetical theology prevailed and what a regard was had to the fables of the mythologists, among the generality of the Pagans, and even among the Athenians themselves, the most learned and religious people in Greece, appears from the treatment Socrates met with for opposing those fables, as he himself intimates in Plato’s *Euthyphron*. He there particularly refers to the fabulous traditions concerning Saturn’s castrating and dethroning his father *Coelus*, and Jupiter’s casting his father Saturn into prison for devouring his sons, by which *Euthyphron* endeavoured to justify himself for prosecuting his own father. Socrates, whose design it is to make him sensible of the absurdity of the literal sense of those fables, tells him, that this was the very thing for which he (*Socrates*) was accused, because when he heard any man say such things of the gods, he showed his dislike of them.†

After Christianity made its appearance in the world, the Pagans, when charged with the absurdities of the mythological fables, were wont to throw it off, by pretending that these were only poetical fictions. But, from the observations which have been made, it sufficiently appears that, in considering the Pagan theology, a particular regard must be had to the mythology of the poets, which was wrought into the popular religion, and lay at the foundation of most of their sacred rites, and public worship. And yet nothing can give us a more melancholy idea of the state of religion among the ancient heathens, even in the most polite and civilized nations. The system of the poetical theology was full of the genealogies, the

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\* *De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 24. p. 314.*

† *Plato Oper. Ficin. p. 49. F. Edit. Lugd. 1590.*

rapes, the adulteries, the contentions of their gods. These things were acted on the theatres with the applause and approbation of the people. These were the deities, to whom temples and altars were erected, and sacrifices offered; to whose statues they paid divine honours, and whom the poets sung in all the charms of flowing numbers.

Eusebius has some just observations with regard to the Pagan mythology, which it may not be amiss to mention in this place. The substance of what he says is this. That when the ancients deified their princes and great men, and the inventors of useful things, being filled with admiration, they made them the objects of their worship, and applied the venerable idea they had of God in their minds, to those their kings and benefactors. They carried their respect for them to such a degree of extravagance, as to celebrate all their actions, even their acts of violence, their lewdnesses, their wars, and contentions: the memory of which, as of some great exploits, was transmitted with applause to posterity, and entered into the worship that was paid to them, being mixed with the ideas of their divinity. But afterwards, some of later times, and who were comparatively of yesterday, being ashamed of these things, and pretending to a more subtile kind of philosophy, endeavoured to turn them into allegory, and interpreted them as signifying physical causes, and the phenomena of nature. But he very properly observes that, though they used their utmost efforts, by forced explications, to put a plausible colour upon the theology of the ancients, and the stories of their gods, yet none of them attempted to make the least alteration in the ancient religious rites, which were founded on the literal sense of those stories; but were rather for preserving them, and professed a great veneration for the religion derived to them from their ancestors, of which these things made a part.\*

To this judgment of Eusebius, concerning the fables of the

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\* Prepar. Evangel. lib. ii. cap. 6. p. 75, 74. Edit. Paris, 1628.

ancient mythology, may be added that of Dionysius Halicarnasseus. This celebrated critic and historian, in the first book of his *Roman History*, does not deny that some of those fables might possibly in some cases be of use; yet observes that small was the benefit which could accrue from them, and this only to those who could penetrate into their hidden meaning and design. But that few there were who attained to this kind of philosophy: and the rude and unlearned multitude loved to take those stories concerning the gods, in the grossest sense, and were thereby in danger either of contemning the gods, or of giving themselves an unrestrained liberty in committing the basest and wickedest actions, when they saw that the gods themselves warranted them by their practice. This passage of Dionysius is cited with approbation by Lord Herbert, *De Relig. Gentil.* cap. xi. p. 130, et 136. Edit. Amstel. 8vo.



## CHAP. VII.

*The civil theology of the Pagans considered. That of the ancient Romans has been much commended, yet became in process of time little less absurd than the poetical, and in many instances was closely connected and complicated with it. The pernicious consequences of this to religion and morals. Some account of the absurd and immoral rites which were anciently practised in the most civilized nations, and which made a part of their religion; being either prescribed by the laws, or established by customs which had the force of laws. The politicians and civil magistrates took no effectual methods to rectify this, but rather countenanced and abated the popular superstition and idolatry.*

FROM the poetical or fabulous let us proceed to the civil theology of the Pagans, which was the public and authorized religion, established by the legislators and the magistrates, or chief men of the community, the principes civitatis, as Varro calls them. And this is the rather to be considered, as it was that which the philosophers themselves, whatever private opinions or speculations they might entertain, or dispute of in their schools, universally conformed to in their own practice, and also exhorted others to do so. It must therefore be allowed by all, that from this we may justly take our measures of the state of religion in the heathen world. Varro describes it to be that which ought to be known and practised by the citizens, and which was administered by the priests: and that it particularly determined what gods they were publicly to worship, what sacred rites they were to observe, and what sacrifices to offer. “Quod in urbibus cives, maximè sacerdotes, nosse et administrare debent. In quo est, quos deos publice colere, quæ sacra et sacrificia facere quemque par sit.”\*

And, in considering the civil theology of the Pagans, I shall have a particular regard to that of the Romans. Dionysius Halicarnasseus praises the Roman institutions of religion, especially those which were appointed at the first establishment of their state. He observes that they made use of the best of the Grecian institutions, but did not admit any of those

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\* Varro ap. August. C. D. lib. vi. cap. 5. p. 117.

fables of theirs which contained things unworthy of the gods into the public religion. And that, in what related to the sacred ceremonies and worship of the gods, all things were done with a becoming piety and gravity, in which they far excelled both Greeks and barbarians.\* The ordering of the public religion was all along in the hands of the wisest and greatest men of the state. Cicero, in his *Oratio pro Domo sua ad Pontifices*, extols the wisdom of their ancestors, in appointing that the same persons who had the chief administration in civil affairs, should also preside over the ceremonies of religion. He speaks of the office of the priests with great respect; and tells them, that the honour and safety of the commonwealth, the public liberty, the houses and fortunes of the citizens, and the gods themselves, were committed to their wisdom and care. And, in his *Oratio de Haruspicum Responsis*, he mentions it as the peculiar praise of the Romans, that they were the most religious of all people, and excelled all nations in piety, and especially in this eminent point of wisdom, that they clearly perceived that all things are governed by the providence and divinity of the immortal gods.†

Let us therefore inquire how the public religion stood with the ancient Romans.

It is a general observation, which affects the whole civil theology of the Pagans, that of the Romans as well as of other heathen nations, that the public worship which was instituted by their most celebrated legislators, and prescribed and established by the laws of their several cities and countries, was paid not to one only God, but to a multiplicity of deities. In the passage now quoted from Cicero, when he so highly extols the religion of the ancient Romans, he takes particular notice of this, that

\* Dion. Halic. *Hist. lib. ii.*

† "Quam volumus licet, patres conscripti, ipsi nos amemus, tamen nec numero

"Hispanos, nec robore Gallos, nec calliditate Pœnos, nec artibus Græcos, nec denique hoc ipso hujus gentis et terræ domestico nativoque sensu, Italos ipsos ac Latinos; sed pietate ac religione, atque hâc unâ sapientiâ, quod Deorum immortalium numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnes gentes nationesque superavimus." *Orat. De Harusp. Respons. N. 9.*

they were persuaded that all things are governed by the divinity of the immortal gods. Their religion therefore was properly polytheism. And the providence they acknowledged was the providence not of one God, but of many gods. Lord Bolingbroke indeed has taken upon him to affirm "that the worship of this multiplicity of gods did not interfere with the supreme Being, in the minds of those who worshipped them."\* But I cannot see upon what foundation this can be pretended. The same author elsewhere speaking of the crowd of divinities among the heathens, declares that "they intercepted the worship of the supreme Being; and that this monstrous assemblage made the object of vulgar adoration."† It was to prevent this that all manner of worship of inferior deities was so strictly prohibited in the law of Moses, and the people were expressly commanded to have no other gods but one; to worship the one true God, the Creator of the universe, and him only; whereby it was gloriously distinguished from all other laws and constitutions. This constitution was peculiar to the Jews;‡ and its being established among them was owing not merely to the superior wisdom of their lawgiver, but to his hav-

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\* Bol. Works, vol. v. p. 505. Edit. 4to.

† Ibid. vol. iv. p. 80, and 461.

‡ Dr. Hyde, in his celebrated book, *De Religione Veterum Persarum*, has taken great pains to show that the ancient Persians worshipped the one true God. Some persons of great learning and judgment have thought that his authorities were not sufficient. But, if we allow the account he gives to be a just one, they were instructed, as he observes, in the true ancient patriarchal religion by their great progenitors Shem and Elam, who derived it from Noah and Adam, to whom it originally came by divine revelation. And, upon their deviating from it, the patriarch Abraham introduced a reformation among them; and, when they again lapsed into the Sabaitical idolatry, they were reformed by Zerdusht or Zoroaster, who lived in the reign of Gushtasp Loroasp, or Darius Hystaspes. And this Zerdusht, according to the accounts given of him by Dr. Hyde from the oriental writers, must have learned the principal things in his religion from the Jews; having been a disciple of one of the Jewish prophets, and having incorporated many of the rites prescribed in the law of Moses into his own. This is what the learned Doctor set himself particularly to show in his tenth chapter, the title of which runs thus; "*Persarum religio in multis convenit cum Judaicâ, et ab eâ magnâ ex parte desumpta fuit.*"

ing had the advantage of an extraordinary revelation from God, the authority of which was confirmed by a series of the most illustrious divine attestations. Whereas among other nations where the worship of many gods was countenanced and established by the laws, they lost and confounded the knowledge and worship of the one true God amidst a multiplicity of idol deities, and served and worshipped the creature more than the Creator.

The learned Dr. Cudworth, though very much inclined to put the most favourable construction upon the Pagan theology, acknowledges, that "the civil theology of the Pagans, as well as the poetical, had not only many fantastic gods in it, but an appearance of a plurality of independent deities; it making several supreme in their several territories and functions: as one to be the chief ruler over the heavens, another over the air, another over the sea, one to be the giver of corn, another of wine, &c." And he produces a remarkable passage from Aristotle, in which he argues against Zeno thus: "Whereas Zeno takes it for granted, that men have an idea in their minds of God, as one the most excellent and powerful being of all: this doth not seem to be according to the law; for there the gods seem to be mutually better one than another, respectively to several things. And therefore Zeno took not this account of mankind from that which vulgarly seemeth."\* Here Aristotle intimates that, according to the laws of cities and countries, that is, in the civil or political theology, there seems to be no one absolutely powerful or all-perfect being, but a plurality of gods, one of which is supposed to be more powerful as to one thing, another as to another.

I do not deny that even the vulgar among the Pagan polytheists seem, for the most part, to have had some notion of one supreme God. It was before observed that the Jupiter in the Capitol was regarded by the Romans as the chief god in their

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\* See Aristotle's treatise *De Xenophane, Zenone, et Gorgia*, Oper. tom. I, p. 1246. Edit. Paris 1629.

religion, and the supreme object of their public worship. But it was shown that this Jupiter was confounded, in the popular notion, with the chief of the hero deities. They attributed to him a superiority over the other gods, but seem to have regarded him as one of the same kind, though of greater eminency than the rest. Accordingly, they were worshipped in conjunction with him: and it was common with the Pagans in general to speak of God and the gods promiscuously, because they considered them all as making up one system, and as joint sharers in the government of the world; having each of them their several territories and functions, as Dr. Cudworth expresses it in the passage above quoted from him. Servius on those words of Virgil, *Georgic. lib. i. vers. 21.*

“*Dique deæque omnes studium quibus arva tueri,*”

observes that, after a special invocation, he proceeds to a general one, lest any deity should be neglected. And he acquaints us that this was agreeable to the constant custom of the priests, who, according to an ancient rite, in all their sacred ceremonies and devotions, after addressing themselves to the particular deities, to whom at that time it was necessary to offer up prayers and sacrifices, were wont to invoke all the gods in general. “*Post specialem invocationem transit ad generalem, ne quod numen prætereat, more pontificum, per quos, ritu veteri, in omnibus sacris, post speciales deos, quos ad ipsum sacrum quod fiebat necesse erat invocare, generaliter omnia numina invocabantur.*”

This general view of the civil and popular theology of the Pagans might be sufficient to show the sad state of religion among them. But it will set this in a stronger light, if we consider more particularly what has been already hinted, that there was a very close connection between their civil theology and that which is called the fabulous and poetical. The public religion was, as Dr. Cudworth acknowledges, “a strange mixture, made up partly of the physical, partly of the poetical theology.” And even with respect to Jupiter Capitolinus, he saith, in a passage before quoted from him, that “it is plain,

“that here there is a certain mixture of the mythical or poetical theology, together with the natural, as almost every where else there was, to make up the civil theology of the “Pagans.”\* It is true, that those great men Scævola and Varro passed a severe censure upon the mythology of the poets, as making unworthy representations of the gods; and recommend the civil theology, which was established by the laws, and administered by the priests, as that which alone the people ought to follow. And yet it is capable of a clear proof, that in fact no small part of the civil theology was founded upon the poetical mythology, or traditionary fables of the gods. This is what St. Austin has strongly urged against Varro in several parts of his great work *De Civitate Dei*. He very properly observes that those poetical fables which Varro censures as unworthy of the gods, and as ascribing to them actions which none but the vilest of men could be guilty of, were not only permitted to be acted on the public theatres, and heard with pleasure by the people; but that they were regarded as things pleasing to the gods themselves, by which they were propitiated and rendered favourable. And accordingly they were taken into the public religion.† Games were celebrated and plays founded upon them. Those fables were appointed to be acted by way of expiation to appease the gods, as if the exhibiting the representations of their own vicious exploits were the best way of putting them into good humour, and averting the tokens of their displeasure. Speaking of Jupiter’s adulteries, and of his ravishing Ganymede, and carrying him off to be his cup-bearer, he quotes that passage of Tully, “Fingebat hæc Homerus, et humana ad deos transfe-

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\* Intel. Syst. p. 450.

† St. Austin upon this occasion exclaims, “O religiosas aures populares, atque in his etiam Romanas! Quod de diis immortalibus philosophi disputant ferre non possunt: Quod verò poetæ canunt, et histriones agunt—non solum ferunt, sed etiam libenter audiunt. Neque id tantum, sed diis quoque ipsa hæc placere, et per hæc eos placandos esse, decernunt.” *De Civ. Dei*, lib. vi. cap. 5. p. 117.

“rebat, divina mallet ad nos”—that is, “Homer feigned these things, and ascribed human actions and qualities to the gods; I had rather he had raised men to an imitation of the divine.”\* Upon which he asks, “Cur ergo ludi scenici, ubi hæc dictantur, cantantur, actantur, eorum honoribus exhibentur? Inter res divinas a doctissimis conscribuntur?—Why then are those plays in which these things are frequently said, sung and acted, exhibited to the honour of the gods? And reckoned among sacred things even by the most learned? Here,” adds he, “Cicero might justly blame not the fictions of the poets, but the institutions of their ancestors; who yet might plead for themselves, that these were things which the gods required, who threatened to inflict punishments, if they were neglected, and showed themselves pleased and gratified with the observation of them.” Of which he produces an instance out of the Roman history, which is also related by Livy and Valerius Maximus.† That learned Father frequently insists upon this as a thing publicly known, and which could not be denied, that the public games and plays in which the flagitious actions of their gods were represented, were, on certain occasions, considered as acts of religion, encouraged by their deities, and celebrated as in honour of them.‡ Arnobius, who was very well acquainted with the Pagan rites and usages, made the same observation, and particularly mentions Plautus’s *Amphytrio*, as one of the plays which were thus acted.§ The same Arnobius justly upbraids the heathens for ascribing the most base and unworthy actions to him whom they described as the Father of gods and men, the chief God, the Thunderer, who shakes heaven with his nod, and to whom they attributed the most divine titles. He thinks that if they had any regard to piety or decency, the public authority ought to interpose, by forbidding such

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\* *Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. cap. 26.*

† *De Civ. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 26.*

‡ *Ibid. lib. i. cap. 26, 25, 27.*

§ *Arnob. advers. Gentes, lib. vii. p. 238. Edit. var. Lugd. Bat.*

representations. Instead of which they encouraged them; and admitted them into their religion; whereas they would punish any man who should cast such reflections upon a senator or magistrate.\* And it is a pertinent remark of St. Austin, that the *Dii selecti*, which were of the highest dignity, and concerning whom Varro wrote a particular treatise, had worse things said of them than the gods of an inferior order.†

To show the near connection there was between the civil and poetical theology, it is observed by the same author, that the images, forms, habits, and ornaments of their gods, their different sexes and ages, as represented in their temples, and the sacred festivals instituted to their honour, had all of them a reference to the fables of the poets and mythologists, and were founded upon them. And it is therefore with reason that he pronounces, that both the civil and the fabulous theology might each of them be called civil and each fabulous. The learned Dr. Cudworth, who sometimes seems to think the fathers carried their charges against Paganism too far, yet approves this observation, and says, “it is truly affirmed “by St. Austin, concerning their mythical or fabulous, and “their political or civil theology, that both the fabulous theology of the Pagans was in part their civil, and their civil “was fabulous.‡—*Et civilis et fabulosa, ambæ fabulosæ sunt, “ambæque civiles. Ambas inveniat fabulosas, qui vanitates “et obscœnitates ambarum prudenter inspexerit: ambas “civiles, qui scenicos ludos pertinentes ad fabulosam, in deorum civilium festivitatis, et in urbium divinis rebus, adverterit.*”§ “Yea,” he says, “that things may be found in “the books which treat of religion, and the sacred rites, “which grave poets have thought unfit to be the subject of

\* Arnob. advers. Gentes, lib. iv. p. 140, 141, 149, 150.

† The select gods, of whom Varro treats, were twenty in number, twelve males, and eight females. Janus, Jupiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, the Sun, Orcus, Liber Pater, Tellus, Ceres, Juno, Luna, Diana, Minerva, Venus, Vesta. Ap. August. De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 2. p. 125. et cap. 4. p. 127.

‡ Intel. Syst. p. 477.

§ De Civit. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 8. p. 120.



“their verses—Ista in rerum divinarum libris reperiuntur, quæ graves poetæ suis carminibus indigna duxerant.”\*

These things must needs have had the most pernicious consequences in exposing religion to contempt. The heathen theology had a natural tendency to introduce a spirit of irreligion and profaneness. The same gods, as St. Austin observes, were laughed at in the theatres, and adored in the temples. “Non alii dii ridentur in theatris, quàm qui adorantur in templis: nec aliis ludos exhibetis, quam quibus immolatis.”†

There are some remarkable passages produced by the same excellent writer out of a book of Seneca's, not now extant, *De Superstitione*, which is also referred to by Tertullian, in his *Apologetic*, cap. 12. in which that great philosopher and statesman inveighs no less against the civil theology of the Romans, or the religion of the state, than Varro had done against the fabulous or poetical. Speaking of the images of the gods, he finds fault with their giving them the forms and habits of men, wild beasts, and fishes, and a mixture of sexes: and says, “they call those gods, which if they had life and breath, and a man should meet them unexpectedly, would pass for monsters—*Numina vocant, quæ, si spiritu ac cepto subito occurrerent, monstra haberentur.*” He exposes the cruel and lascivious rites made use of in the worship of several of their deities, especially of the mother of the gods. And yet declares “that a wise man will observe all these things, not indeed as acceptable to the gods, but as commanded by the laws—*Quæ omnia sapiens servabit, tanquam legibus jussa, non tanquam diis grata.*” And, speaking of that ignoble rabble of gods, as he calls them, which the superstition of many ages had heaped together, he saith, “we will so adore them, ‘as to remember that this worship is rather matter of custom, than founded in nature or truth—*Omnem istam ignobilem deorum turbam quam longa su-*

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\* *De Civit. Dei*, lib. vi. cap. 8. p. 118.

† *Ibid.* p. 117.

“perstitio congegisset, sic adorabimus, ut meminerimus cultum  
 “istum magis ad morem quam ad rem pertinere.”\* By this it  
 appears that, in compliance with popular custom and the laws,  
 he was for adoring the rabble of gods which he despised;  
 thus leading the people, by his own practice and example, to  
 think that he himself approved that worship.

But that we may have a more thorough conviction of the  
 deplorable state of religion in the heathen world, let us take  
 a view of the absurd and immoral rites made use of in the  
 worship of their gods, and which were either prescribed by  
 the laws, or were established customs, countenanced by the  
 magistrates, and which had obtained the force of laws, and  
 may therefore be regarded as belonging to the public religion  
 of the Pagans.

I shall not take notice of those rites of their worship which  
 were merely ridiculous, of which many might be mentioned;  
 but only of those which were of a bad and immoral nature  
 and tendency, and which were either cruel and inhuman, or  
 lascivious and impure.

Among those of the former kind was the offering up of  
 human sacrifices, which for many ages was very general in  
 the Pagan world. It were easy to heap up many testimonies  
 to this purpose from credible and approved authors. It ob-  
 tained among the Phœnicians, Syrians, and Arabians, as also  
 among the Carthaginians, and other people of Africa, and  
 among the Egyptians, till the time of Amasis. The same  
 thing we are told concerning the Thracians, and the ancient  
 Scythians in general, and several other nations, many of  
 which are mentioned by Porphyry, in the account he gives of  
 this matter, in his second book *De Abstinencia*.† As to the  
 Gauls, Germans, and Britons, that they were wont to appease  
 their gods with human sacrifices, Tacitus and Cæsar inform

\* Ap. August. ubi supra, lib. vi. chap. 10. p. 122, 123.

† Porphyry. *Περὶ ἀσκήσεως*, lib. ii. sect. 27. p. 71. et *ibid.* sect. 34, 35, 36. p. 93  
 et seq. Edit. Cantabrig. 1655.

us.\* And Procopius says the same thing of the ancient Heruli.† And though this cruel rite was never so common among the Greeks and Romans, as among some other nations, yet it continued for a long time to be in use among them upon extraordinary occasions. Porphyry mentions several of the Greek islands, in which human sacrifices were offered at certain seasons and solemnities; as in Chios, Tenedos, Salamis, Rhodes, and Crete. Among those who sometimes offered human sacrifices he also takes notice of the Lacedemonians and Athenians; and observes from Phylarchus, that the Grecians were wont to sacrifice men when they went to war.‡ Clemens Alexandrinus, in his admonition to the Gentiles, shows, from good authorities, that the same custom obtained among the Thessalians, Messenians, Phocæans, and Lesbians. And that Erechtheus, king of Athens, and the famous Roman general Marius, sacrificed their own daughters. Plutarch, in his life of Themistocles, informs us, that three very beautiful Persian captives, richly habited and adorned, were, by the advice of the prophet Euphrantides, offered as sacrifices to Bacchus Omestes, or the devourer, as a vow for victory: and though Themistocles was startled at the inhumanity of it, the people, with one voice invoking

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\* Tacit. Annal. 14. cap. 3. et De Moribus German. p. 542. Edit. Amstel. 1661. Cæsar de Bel. Gall. lib. vi. cap. 21.

† Procop. De Bel. Goth. lib. vi. cap. 11. By the accounts ancient writers give us, this custom spread through Europe, Asia, and Africa. The same may be observed concerning America, which was not known in their time. Acosta, an author of credit, tells us that the Americans were possessed with the fury of offering human sacrifices to an incredible degree. All agree that this was a common practice among the Mexicans. Gemelli Carreri, a late ingenious traveller, in his account of Mexico, insists largely upon this subject: and what he saith of the number of human sacrifices that were there offered, especially on some extraordinary occasions, is astonishing. Acosta tells us of numbers of children that were sacrificed in Peru, at the coronation of the Incas, and other special occasions. Hist. Ind. lib. v. cap. 19. This however is contradicted by Garcilasso de la Vega, in his Royal Commentaries of Peru; who, though he acknowledges that the Mexicans and other neighbouring nations offered human sacrifices, says the Incas would not suffer them in their territories.

‡ Porphyr. ubi supra.

Bacchus, and bringing the captives to the altar, compelled him to perform the sacrifice. The same great historian and philosopher, in his life of Marcellus, tells us that the Romans, in the beginning of a war with the Gauls, in obedience to some oracles contained in the Sibylline books, buried alive a Greek man and a Greek woman, and likewise a Gaulish man and a Gaulish woman, in the ox-market, by way of sacrifice. Livy acquaints us that they repeated this sacrifice at the beginning of the second Punic war.\* And Plutarch adds that they continued to offer those sacrifices in his time.† We are told by Florus that, when Rome was taken by the Gauls, those of the Romans that were advanced in years, and had been honoured with the greatest dignities, gathered together into the Forum, and there being devoted by the pontiff, consecrated themselves to the *Dii manes*, the infernal gods. “*Majores natu, amplissimis usi honoribus, in Forum coierunt, ibique devotente pontifice, diis se manibus consecraverunt.*”‡ Human sacrifices were still offered, as Porphyry informs us, till the time of the emperor Adrian, who ordered them in most places to be abolished. And then, as Eusebius observes, the Gospel had every where diffused its salutary light. The best of the philosophers had condemned it before, but had not been able to extirpate it. And even after this, there were still some instances of it in the Roman empire, as long as the Pagan religion prevailed. The same Porphyry, who lived in the reign of the emperor Dioclesian, mentions it as a thing well known, that in his days, in the city of Rome itself, a man was wont to be sacrificed at the feast of Jupiter Latiaris. “*Ἄλλ’ ἐστὶ καὶ νῦν τις ἀγνοεῖ κατὰ τὴν μεγάλην πόλιν τῇ τοῦ Δακτυλίου Δίος ἑορτῇ σφαζόμενον ἄνθρωπον.*”§ Lactantius, who wrote a little after Porphyry, says the same thing was done in his days. “*Jupiter etiam nunc sanguine colitur humano.*”||

\* Liv. Hist. lib. xxii. cap. 57.

† Plut. in Vita Marcelli. Oper. tom. I. p. 299. See also his Roman Questions, Quest. 83.

‡ Luc. Flor. lib. i. cap. 13.

§ Porphyr. ubi supra.

|| Divin. Instit. lib. i. cap. 21. p. 113.

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This then may be justly regarded as making a part of the Pagan religion. Even in those places where it was not ordinarily used, yet on extraordinary occasions it made a principal part of the solemn sacrifices paid to their deities, and was looked upon as the most effectual way of appeasing them, and procuring their favour. Lord Herbert observes that "their cruel priests taught them, that victims of less dignity might be sufficient for inferior deities, but to their highest god, the sun, these as the most valuable sacrifices were to be offered.—*Sacrificandi ritus hic fuit, ut homo in solis honorem mactaretur; licet enim minores victimæ aliis offerrentur, summo tamen eorum deo summam convenire victimam docuerunt atrocissimi sacerdotes.*"\* But it ought to be mentioned to the honour of the law of Moses, that, at the time when this kind of sacrifices very generally obtained in all the neighbouring nations, they were expressly forbidden in that law, and represented as abominable in the sight of God. And wherever Christianity has been established, these sacrifices have been abolished.

There were also other rites made use of among the Pagans, which were cruel and shocking to humanity. Baal's priests were wont to cut and slash themselves with knives and lances. 1 Kings xviii. 28. The same thing was practised in the worship of Isis, according to Herodotus, and of Bellona, as Lampridius informs us; to which also Lucan refers, *Pharsal. lib. i. vers. 56, 57.* In the Omophagia, one of the festivals of Bacchus, his priests used to tear and devour the entrails of goats, raw and reeking, in imitation of their god.† Many authors take notice of the solemnities of Cybele, the mother of the gods, whose priests not only emasculated themselves, but in their sa-

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\* Herbert De Relig. Gentil. cap. 4. p. 31. Edit. 8vo. Amstel.

† Potter's Antiquities of Greece, vol. I. p. 348 et 407. Arnobius upbraids the Pagans with this savage rite. "*Bacchanalia prætermittam immania, quibus nomen Omophagiis Græcum est, in quibus, furore mentito, et sequestratâ pectoris sanitate, circumplicatis vos anguibus, atque ut vos plenos dei numine ac majestate doceatis, caprorum reclamantium viscera cruentatis oribus dissipatis.*" Arnob. Advers. Gent. lib. v. p. 169. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1651.

cred processions made hideous noises and howlings, cutting themselves till the blood gushed out as they went along. These frantic and cruel rites are well exposed by Seneca, in a passage quoted by St. Austin, from his book, *De Superstitione*, mentioned above.\* Yet the worship of this goddess made a part of the public religion at Rome. Her statue was brought by order of the senate, with great pomp, from Pessinum in Galatia to Rome, pursuant to the advice of the Sibylline oracles, as Livy informs us,† and the *Ludi Megalenses* were instituted to her honour.

Among the cruel rites made use of in the worship of the Pagan deities may be also reckoned the *διαμαστίγυσις*, which was observed at Sparta, in honour of Diana Orthia, and was so called from the scourging there used. They whipped boys with an unrelenting severity upon her altar, whilst the priestess of Diana stood by to see that it was rigorously executed. The boys often died under it, and in that case, when they bore it with a manly fortitude, they were honoured with a public funeral, and were buried with garlands on their heads, and, as Lucian says, they had statues erected to their honour.‡ This custom is said to have had its rise in consequence of an oracle, which ordered that the altar of the goddess should be sprinkled with blood. Accordingly they offered every year in sacrifice a man chosen for that purpose. This was changed by Lycurgus into the whipping of boys at her altar. But when the boys were whipped to death, it was the most cruel way of sacrificing them: of which Plutarch, in his life of Lycurgus, declares he had seen several instances. Dacier, in his notes on Plutarch's life of Themistocles, observes that, in one of the towns of Arcadia, they used to whip the women, as they did the young men or boys, round Diana's altar at Sparta. And Potter, in his *Greek Antiquities*, says that Bacchus had an al-

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\* *De Civ. Dei*, lib. vi. cap. 10. p. 123. † *Liv. Hist.* lib. xxix. cap. 14.

‡ *Potter's Greek Antiq.* vol. I. p. 344. *Lucian. Oper.* tom. II. p. 297. Edit. Amstel.

tar in Arcadia, upon which a great many young damsels were beaten to death with rods.\*

And as some of the heathen rites were cruel and inhuman, others were no less remarkable for all manner of licentiousness. In the festivals of Bacchus, which were celebrated all over Greece, but with a peculiar solemnity at Athens, the seat of learning and politeness, persons of both sexes ran about in the night as well as day, in ridiculous postures, invoking the deity with loud cries and yellings, and putting on an appearance of fury and madness. And revelling and drunkenness was part of the worship to which they were obliged, in honour of the god. The victors, in their drinking contests on this occasion, were rewarded with a crown of leaves and a vessel of wine.† It was a saying of Plato, recorded by Diogenes Laërtius, that to drink to excess was not allowable, except upon the festival of that god who is the giver of wine.‡ The licentiousness of these and some other festivals was so well known, that it was the advice of wise men to married women to abstain from the feasts of Bacchus and Ceres, and the mother of the gods. Hence that saying of Aristippus, mentioned by Sextus Empiricus, concerning a chaste woman, “that she will not be corrupted even at the Bacchanals;” intimating the great danger women were in of being vitiated at those festivals.§

This leads me to observe, that many of their rites were indecent and impure. The Lupercalia, one of the most ancient Roman festivals in honour of Pan, were celebrated in an immodest manner, the priests running about the streets, naked all but the middle, and striking all they met, especially the women, with thongs made of the skins of goats which they had sacrificed.|| The Ludi Florales were also a part of the public Roman religion, celebrated by the direction of the Sibylline oracles, in honour of the goddess Flora, and were appointed by the authority of the state. The chief part of the solemnity

\* Potter, ubi supra, p. 193.

† Ibid. p. 331, 348, 349, 407.

‡ Diog. Laërt. lib. iii. segm. 39.

§ Pyrrhon. Hypotyp. lib. iii. cap. 24.

|| See Kennet's Roman Antiquities, p. 64, 65.

was managed by a company of shameless strumpets, who ran up and down naked, sometimes dancing in lascivious postures, sometimes fighting, and acting the mimics: which was not discountenanced, but rather encouraged by the gravest magistrates.\* The rites of the goddess Cybele were no less infamous for lewdness than for cruelty. And the Kotyttia or Kotytis, a nocturnal festival, in honour of Kotys or Kotytis, the goddess of wantonness, was observed by the Athenians, Corinthians, Chians, Thracians, and others, and celebrated with rites suitable to such a goddess, who was thought to be delighted with nothing so much as lewdness and debauchery: and the priests practised all sorts of effeminacy and meretricious arts.† The Aphrodisia, or festivals in honour of Venus, were observed with lascivious ceremonies in divers parts of Greece. At Corinth these festivals were celebrated by harlots, as we learn from Athenæus; who also informs us that they who supplicated the goddess, were wont to promise to devote some women to her, in order to the obtaining their requests.‡ Strabo, a grave and judicious writer, relates that there was a temple of Venus at Corinth so rich, that it maintained above a thousand harlots, sacred to her service, *ιεροδούλους ἑταίρας*, which were consecrated both by men and women to that goddess.§ The same author, speaking of Comana, a city of Cappadocia, saith that there were many women there, who prostituted their bodies for hire, most of them sacred, *πλείστοιαι ἱεραὶ*, and that there as well as at Corinth, because of the multitude of harlots consecrated to Venus, there was a great resort of people to sojourn and keep festivals in that place.|| The truth is, these impure customs were spread far and wide. Herodotus acquaints us that there was a law among the Babylonians, that every woman who was a native of that country, should once in her life go to the temple of

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\* See Kennet's Roman Antiquities, p. 288, 289.

† Potter's Greek Antiq. ubi supra, p. 375, 376.

‡ Ibid. p. 337. Athen. Deipnosoph. lib. xiii. cap. 6.

§ Strabo, lib. viii. p. 581. Edit. Amstel. 1707.

|| Ibid. lib. xii. p. 837.



Venus, to prostitute herself to a stranger; that there were many women sitting at the temple for that purpose; and that the money which was given them, and which it was not lawful for them to refuse, was dedicated to sacred uses.\* This custom, as a learned and ingenious author has observed, is not to be charged upon any peculiar wantonness of the women of that country. It was done as an act of religion, and a duty required of them towards that goddess; which, when they had once discharged, nothing, as Herodotus farther informs us, could prevail with them to reiterate it.† Strabo also mentions this law and custom, to which, he says, they were directed by a certain oracle, and that the women which came to the temple for that purpose, were wont to come with great pomp, and attended with much company.‡ The same much esteemed author assures us, concerning the Armenians, that they principally worshipped the goddess Anaitis, and that the most illustrious persons of the nation dedicated their virgin daughters to her, which after having been for a long time prostituted in her service, were given in marriage, none disdain- ing to marry them, but rather thinking it an honour to do so. And he there also mentions Herodotus as saying the same thing of the Lydian women.§ Other instances of the like kind might be mentioned: as what Lucian tells us of a great temple of Venus, at Byblus in Syria, at which the women prostituted themselves for hire on a certain day to strangers only, and that the gain they got by it was a sacrifice to Venus.|| See also what Valerius Maximus reports to the same purpose, concerning the temple of Venus at Sicca, in Africa.¶ The testimonies which have been produced are not to be suspected, as they are taken from celebrated heathen writers: from whom also it appears that the most abominable impuri-

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\* Herod. lib. i. n. 199. Edit. Francof. 1608.

† De l'Origin des Loix, &c. tom. III. p. 331, et seq.

‡ Strabo, lib. xvi. p. 1081.

§ Ibid. lib. xi. p. 805.

|| Lucian. Oper. vol. II. p. 658. Edit. Amst. 1687.

¶ Val. Max. lib. ii. cap. vi. n. 15.

ties and crimes against nature, made, in many places, a part of their religion. Of this kind is what Strabo relates concerning the filthiness committed with the sacred goats at Mendes in Egypt, where Pan was worshipped: an instance of which is mentioned by Herodotus, who says, it was done publicly and openly when he was in Egypt.\* Nor have we any reason to doubt of the truth of what Julius Firmicus relates concerning the sodomy practised in his time, in some of their temples, particularly those of Juno; which, he says, they were so far from being ashamed of, that they made it the subject of their glorying.† The learned Dr. Spenser has shown that among the ancient Pagan idolaters there were males as well as females consecrated to their deities, who prostituted themselves in their temples on the sacred festivals, and were thought by doing so to yield them acceptable service; and that they were wont to dedicate the gains of their prostitution to their gods and goddesses.‡

Eusebius observes that the heathens came at length to that height of wickedness and impurity, that, through an excess of lustful intemperance, they worshipped with divine honour those parts of the body which are the instruments of exciting and gratifying the most impure passions.§ The figures of them were carried about in some of their sacred processions, to which hymns were sung, and religious veneration paid. This was done among the Egyptians in the Sacra of Isis and Osiris, and, as Diodorus affirms, in the solemnities of other nations, particularly among the Greeks. For a proof of this I would refer to the account given by Potter, in his Grecian Antiquities, of the Aphrodisia, or festival of Venus, celebrated at Cyprus,

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\* Herod. lib. ii. n. 46. Strabo, lib. xvii. p. 1154.

† "Videre est in ipsis templis, cum publico gemitu miseranda ludibria, viros muliebria pati, et hanc impuri et impudici corporis labem gloriosâ ostentatione detegere. Publicant facinora sua, et contaminati corporis vitium cum maxima delectationis macula confitentur." De Errore Profan. Religion. p. 10, 11. Oxon. 1678.

‡ Spenser De Leg. Hebr. lib. ii. cap. 22 et 23.

§ Præpar. Evangel. lib. ii. cap. 6. p. 74.

of the Dionysia or festival of Bacchus at Athens, and of the Thesmophoria, or festival in honour of Ceres, at Syracuse.\*

It has given me some uneasiness to go through a detail which can scarce be mentioned without shocking the delicacy of a modest reader. But it may be of use to let us see what extravagancies and abominations men are capable of, when they have lost and perverted the true knowledge of God, and of his worship. Nothing can give us a more affecting view of the corrupt state of religion in the heathen world, even among the most civilized nations. The Pagan idolatry was not a mere speculative absurdity, but had, in many instances, a very pernicious influence on the morals of the people, encouraging all manner of debauchery and licentiousness. There are several passages in the Old Testament, in which it is intimated that impurity was a usual attendant of the heathen idolatry. And so it also was when the Gospel was first published to the world. It is a just account which St. Peter gives of the gentiles in his time, that they "walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, "revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:" and they thought it "strange, that the Christians did not run with them "into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of them." 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. And St. Paul, having made a lively representation of the inexcusable idolatry into which the gentile world was

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\* Potter's Antiquities, vol. I. p. 357, 347, 348, 369. Concerning the obscenities in their sacred rites and ceremonies, Arnobius, who had been a learned Pagan, treats largely. *Advers. Gent. lib. v. p. 168, 169, et seq. Edit. varior. Lugd. Bat. 1651.* To which may be added what Clem. Alex. relates concerning the sacred chest or coffer of Bacchus, and its impure contents, which were proposed to veneration. Clem. Alex. *Proterpt. p. 16. Edit. Potter.* See also what St. Austin says from Varro, "De turpitudine sacrorum quæ Libero celebrantur. In "Italiæ compitis quædam dicit [Varro] sacra Liberi celebrata cum tantâ licentiâ "turpitudinis, ut in ejus honorem, pudenda virilia colerentur. Nam hoc turpe "membrum, per Liberi dies festos cum honore magno postellis impositum, prius "rure in compitis, et usque in urbem postea vectabatur. In oppido autem La- "vinio uni Libero totus mensis tribuebatur, cujus diebus omnes verbis flagitiosissimi- "mis uterentur, donec illud membrum per forum transvectum esset, atque in loco "suo quiesceret. Cui membro inhoneste matrem familias honestissimam palam "coronam necesse erat imponere." Apud Augustin. *De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 21, p. 136. Edit. Bened.*

generally fallen, observes that, as a just judgment upon them, " God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves." Rom. i. 24. And elsewhere he saith of them that, " being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, they gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to commit all uncleanness with greediness." Eph. iv. 18, 19. This followed from their very religion, and the notions they generally entertained of the gods they worshipped. The celebrated M. De Voltaire is pleased to tell us, that " the religion of the Pagans consisted in nothing but morality and festivals; morality, which is common to men of all ages and places; and festivals, which were no more than times of rejoicing, and could not be of prejudice to mankind." \* That the heathen morality was very defective will appear when I come more particularly to consider it. Nor was morality properly a part of their religion, as taught by the priests. It is a just observation of Mr. Locke, that " the people, under the pain of displeasing the gods, were to frequent the temples: every one went to their sacrifices and services: but the priests made it not their business to teach them virtue." † As to the Pagan festivals, it sufficiently appears, from the account which hath been given of them, that they were far from being so innocent as M. De Voltaire represents them. Both the deities they adored, and the rights of their worship, had a tendency, in many instances, to corrupt their morals.

Another ingenious author, who has shown a very strong prejudice in favour of the Pagan religion and worship, has thought fit to observe that, " if we compare the abominations committed at the feasts of Venus and Bacchus, with the de-

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\* " La religion des Payen ne consistoit que dans la morale, et dans les fetes : la morale, qui est commune aux hommes de tous les tems et de tous les lieux ; et les fetes, qui n'etoient que de jouissances, et ne pourvoient troubler le genre humain." Hist. du Siecle de Louis XIV.

† Locke's Reason of Christ. in his Works, vol. ii. p. 532. 3d edit.

“baucheries which happen upon the great festivals of the Christian church, we shall find that men of all religions are much the same. But must we look upon these abuses as principles of the primitive Pagan or Christian religion?”\* But there is this remarkable difference between them: that what he calls the abuses of the heathen festivals, naturally arose from the notions they formed of their deities, and made a necessary part of the worship paid to them. The whores consecrated to Venus, and the impure rites practised at her festivals, and the drunkennesses and other vicious excesses at the feasts of Bacchus, were supposed to be agreeable to the temper and character of those deities, and to be acceptable and honourable to them. And as such were countenanced, and in many instances prescribed both by their oracles and by their laws. And indeed what other rites could be imagined becoming such a lascivious goddess as Venus, and such a drunken deity as Bacchus was represented to be, or suited to the flagitious actions ascribed to others of their gods, and even to Jupiter, the chief of them? But none can pretend that the revelings and debaucheries committed at some of the Christian festivals make a part of the worship prescribed or countenanced by the Christian religion.

Most of the heathen festivals and solemnities, and the rites, games, and processions, celebrated in honour of their deities, were, as hath been already hinted, founded on the poetical or fabulous theology, and on the traditions of the mythologists. And these rites and solemnities made a part of the public religion: they were authorised by the laws, and celebrated, as Potter observes, at a vast charge.† The Athenians were particularly remarkable for this; who, as they exceeded other people in the number of the gods they adored, so they had, according to Xenophon, in his account of the Athenian republic, twice as many festivals as any other cities.

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\* Chevalier Ramsay's *Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*, vol. II. p. 401, 402.

† Potter's *Greek Antiq.* vol. I. p. 325. Edit. 1st.

It is not to be doubted, that some of the best and wisest among the Pagans disapproved these scandalous excesses. But, as they naturally sprung up out of their religion, no effectual remedy could be applied, whilst the public idolatry and worship of the popular deities continued in force. And this even the philosophers confirmed, by urging it upon every man as his duty, to conform to the religion, and to worship the gods of his country. As to the magistrates and great men of the state, it does not appear that they had any desire or intention, that the people should have such just notions of religion, as might be a proper preservative to them against those idolatrous superstitions. Nor did they give themselves any concern about them; except in cases where they thought the interest of the public required them to interpose; of which we have a famous instance in the horrid and shocking enormities occasioned by the introducing the Bacchanalia into Italy; which were carried so far, and produced such unlawful combinations, as threatened the subversion of the state. Great numbers were therefore put to death, by order of the senate, for being initiated in those mysteries: of which Livy gives a particular account in the 39th book of his history.

The Roman pontiff Scaevola before mentioned, whom Cicero, in his first book *De Oratore*, calls "*jurisperitorum eloquentissimus, et eloquentium jurisperitissimus*," though he finds great fault with the poetical theology concerning the gods, yet was in reality far from desiring that the people should be rightly instructed in the true nature of religion. For, among the things which it was not proper or profitable for the people to know, he reckons the following, viz. that "Hercules and Æsculapius, Castor and Pollux, are not gods: for it is delivered by the learned, that they were men, and deceased according to the common lot of humanity: that the cities have not the true images or representations of those that are gods: and that a true God has neither sex nor age, nor distinct bodily members.—*Non esse deos Herculem, Æsculapium, Castorem, Pollucem: traditur enim a doctis quod homines fuerint, et humanâ conditione defecerint: eorum qui sint dii*

"non habere civitates vera simulacra: quod verus Deus nec sexum habeat nec ætatem, nec definita corporis membra."\*

Varro was very sensible that their religion and worship needed to be reformed. He sticks not to declare that, if he had been to new model the city, he would have endeavoured to make the names and worship of their gods more conformable to truth and nature: but that, as it had been of a long standing among the people, he thought he ought to retain the names and history of the gods as received from the ancients, and to treat of them in such a manner, as should rather engage the common people to worship them with greater veneration, than expose them to contempt.† And accordingly he seems to value himself upon it, as having well merited of his fellow-citizens, in that he not only gave an account of the gods whom the Romans ought to worship, but what power and office belonged to each of them, that the people might not be at a loss whom to address, on any particular occasion. "Ita esse utilem cognitionem deorum, si sciatur quam quisque deus vim et facultatem ac potestatem cujusque rei habeat: ex eo enim poterimus scire quem cujusque rei causa deum advocare atque invocare debeamus."‡ The same great man says, "It is useful to the commonwealth, that men of courage and fortitude should think that they were begotten of the gods, although it be false; that so looking upon themselves to be of divine extraction, they may with the greater boldness and confidence attempt and accomplish the greatest things.—Utile esse civitatibus dicit, ut se viri fortes, etiamsi falsum sit, diis genitos esse credant ut eo modo humanus animus velut divinæ stirpis fiduciam gerens, res magnas aggrediendas præsumat audacius, et agat vehementius."§ And indeed this is agreeable to the rule he lays down, when speaking of religion and the sacred rites, that many things are true which it is of no advantage to the peo-

\* Apud Augustin. De Civit. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 27. p. 84.

† Apud Augustin. ubi supra, cap. 31. p. 87.

‡ Ibid. cap. 22. p. 81.

§ Ibid. lib. iii. p. 49.

ple to know, and that even though they be false, it is expedient that the people should think otherwise. “*Multa esse vera quæ non modo vulgo scire non sit utile, sed etiam tametsi falsa sunt, aliter existimare populum expediat.*” \* It can scarce be doubted, but that some of the great and learned men among them were sensible of the falsehood and absurdity of the public and popular religion. This seems particularly to have been the case of that eminent philosopher and statesman, Cicero, Varro’s friend and intimate. He makes very free with the Pagan gods, and their worship, in several parts of his works. But though he thought these things might be treated of in the philosophical disputations, he was not for having them brought before the people, lest it should tend to the subversion of the public religion. “*Non esse illa vulgò disputanda, ne susceptas publicè religiones disputatio talis extinguat.*” This passage is cited by Lactantius,† and was taken, as Davies thinks, from Cicero’s third book *De Nat. Deorum*, though not now to be found there, as several parts of that book are lost.

Such were the maxims by which the wisest and greatest men of the Pagan world governed themselves, which shows how little was to be expected from them for leading the people into the right knowledge and practice of religion. Indeed their legislators and great men were principally concerned in countenancing and establishing the public idolatry and polytheism, and would not suffer any infringement of the legal appointed rites and worship. They considered religion in a political view, and were not for curing or removing the popular superstition, but rather for making use of it in such a manner as might best answer the ends of the civil power.

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\* *Apud Augustin. ubi supra, lib. iv. cap. 51. p. 87.*

† *Divin. Instit. lib. ii. cap. 3. p. 148. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1660.*



## CHAP. VIII.

*The Pagan mysteries have been highly extolled, as an expedient provided by the civil authority, both for leading the people to the practice of virtue, and for convincing them of the vanity of the common idolatry and polytheism. The tendency of the mysteries to purify the soul, and raise men to the perfection of virtue, examined. At best they were only designed to promote the practice of those virtues which were most useful to society, and to deter men from such vices as were most pernicious to it. In process of time they became greatly corrupted, and had a bad effect on the morals of the people. The pretence, that the mysteries were intended to detect the error of the vulgar polytheism, and to bring men to the acknowledgement and adoration of the one true God, distinctly considered: and the proofs brought for it shown to be insufficient.*

I KNOW of nothing which can be alleged, as designed and appointed by the state, for rectifying the popular notions of religion, except what was done this way, in the celebration of the sacred mysteries. And this indeed was very considerable, and must have had a great effect, if the account given of the nature and design of those mysteries by the very learned author of the Divine Legation of Moses, the present Bishop of Gloucester, may be depended upon. The design of them was, as he represents it, both to engage men to a holy and virtuous practice, and to give them just notions of religion, and detect the errors of the vulgar polytheism. He says that, in the mysteries, "those that were initiated were obliged by solemn engagements to commence a new life of the strictest purity and virtue; nor was a less degree of purity required of the initiated for their future conduct."\* That "the mysteries openly proclaimed it, as their chief business to restore the soul to its original purity."† And that "they professed to exact nothing difficult of the initiated, which they would not assist him to perform."‡ And having represented it as an institution, "which taught the necessity of a strict and holy life;" he makes this

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\* Div. Leg. of Moses, book ii. sect. iv. p. 145. 4th Edit.

† Ibid. p. 142.

‡ Ibid. p. 154.

an argument, that "it could not come out of the sacerdotal warehouse; but must have been the invention of legislators, to whose schemes virtue was necessary."\* And whereas the vicious examples of their gods was one insuperable obstacle to a life of purity and holiness, it was necessary to remedy this evil, which they did by striking at the root of it. So that such of the initiated as were judged capable were made acquainted with the whole delusion. The mystagogue taught them that Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Mars, and the whole rabble of licentious deities, were only dead mortals, subject in life to the same passions and vices with themselves; but having been on other accounts benefactors to mankind, grateful posterity had deified them, and with their virtues had indiscreetly canonized their vices. The fabulous gods being thus routed, the supreme Cause of all things naturally took their place. Him they were taught to consider as the Creator of the universe, who pervaded all things by his virtue, and governed all things by his providence."† He positively asserts that "the ἀποθέματα, or secret doctrines of the mysteries, overthrew the vulgar polytheism, or worship of dead men."‡ And again, that "the clear evidence of antiquity expressly informs us of these two particulars, that the errors of polytheism were detected, and the doctrine of the Unity taught and explained in the mysteries."§ And having observed that it was the design of the mysteries to make men as virtuous as they could, he says that "this they provided for by discovering, to such as were capable of the secret, the whole delusion of polytheism;" and adds that "this being supposed the shaking foundations, was to be done with all possible circumspection, and under the most tremendous seal of secrecy. For they taught, the gods themselves punished the revealers of the secret; and not them only, but the hearers of it too. Nor did they altogether trust to that neither; the state decreed capital pun-

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\* Div. Leg. p. 208, 209.

† Ibid. p. 154, 155.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid. p. 157.

“ishments against the betrayers of the mysteries, and inflict-  
 “ed them with merciless severity.”\* And he concludes his  
 account of the mysteries with observing that “there were  
 “three things about which the mysteries were principally con-  
 “cerned. 1. The rise and establishment of civil society.  
 “2. The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punish-  
 “ments. 3. The error of polytheism, and the principle of  
 “the Unity.”†

Such is the idea our learned and ingenious author gives of  
 the nature and design of the Pagan mysteries. These, he  
 tells us, were celebrated in almost all nations.\* He mentions  
 Egypt, Persia, Thrace, Greece, particularly Argos, Boeotia,  
 Athens, Crete, Cyprus, Samothrace, Amphyssa, Lemnos; like-  
 wise Britain and India. He saith, the nature of all these mys-  
 teries was the same, that they were all derived from the same  
 original, and constituted for the same ends.‡ But that the  
 Eleusinian were the most renowned; and in process of time  
 eclipsed, and as it were swallowed up, the rest. They spread  
 through the Roman empire, and beyond the limits of it. Tully  
 says that the nations in the utmost borders of the earth were  
 initiated into them. “Initiantur gentes orarum ultimæ.” And  
 Apuleius, that crowds were initiated, men and women, persons  
 of all ages, conditions, and dignities.§ So that if these mys-  
 teries were both so excellently designed, and *successfully em-  
 ployed*, as he says they were, almost all nations throughout the  
 world, by the contrivance of the legislators and civil magis-  
 trates, were provided with a noble expedient for raising them  
 to the height of purity and virtue, and convincing them of the  
 error of idolatry and polytheism.

It were to be wished that so beautiful a scheme were found-  
 ed on sufficient proofs. For it must be acknowledged that  
 the account which is here given of the mysteries is highly in-  
 genious and entertaining, and adorned with a variety of learn-  
 ing. It gives me uneasiness to be obliged to differ from an

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\* Div. Leg. p. 180.

† Ibid. p. 138, 160.

‡ Ibid. p. 286.

§ Ibid. p. 140, 146.

author eminent for his abilities and genius, as well as for his extensive learning, and the station he bears. But since he represents the mysteries as the *most sacred part of the Pagan religion*,\* and as belonging to the civil theology of the Pagans, which we are now considering, the subject I am upon, and the regard I owe to what appears to me, upon the most impartial inquiry, to be the truth, obliges me to give reasons why I cannot think this account of the Pagan mysteries to be a just one.

I need not enter upon a very particular examination of the tendency the mysteries had to engage men to the practice of the strictest purity and virtue. A few observations upon it may suffice. I readily acknowledge that the conductors of the mysteries made high pretensions this way. In order to procure a greater veneration for them, the hierophant, or person who presided in those mysteries, was obliged to devote himself wholly to the divine service, and to live a chaste and single life. To which purpose it was usual for him to anoint himself with the juice of hemlock, which, by its extreme coldness, is said to extinguish in a great measure the natural heat.† With the same view it was that persons known to be guilty of any atrocious crime were forbidden to be present at the mysteries. These pretences were carried to a still greater height, after Christianity made its appearance, and taught so pure and sublime a morality. The most learned and zealous advocates for Paganism, as Apuleius, Jamblicus, Hierocles, Proclus, and others, cried up the mysteries as the most effectual means for purifying the soul, and raising it to communion with the gods.‡ For this purpose, many of the latter Platonists and Pytha-

\* Div. Leg. p. 136.

† Potter's Greek Antiq. vol. I. p. 183, 356. 1st Edit.

‡ Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 144. The same learned author observes that, "if we may believe a certain ancient, who appears to be well versed in these matters, the mysteries gained their end, by clearing up all doubts concerning the righteous government of the gods." He refers to Sopater, in Divis. Quæst. See Div. Leg. vol. I. p. 210. I must confess, such passages as these, instead of raising in me a higher opinion of the mysteries, make me very much suspect the truth of the extravagant encomiums bestowed upon them.

goreans got themselves initiated into the several mysteries of the gods, in different nations, and applied themselves to what they called theurgy; though, as St. Austin observes, Porphyry owned that he had not, after all his researches, met with any satisfactory way of purging the soul.\* But I cannot think that the legislators, in instituting the mysteries, concerned themselves much about restoring the soul to its original purity, in the Pythagorean or Platonic sense; what they had in view, by our learned author's own acknowledgment, was, to secure and promote the cause of virtue, as far as was necessary for the ends of civil society. As to any thing further than this they were not solicitous. The mysteries seem to have been originally designed to tame and civilize the rude and barbarous people, to form and polish their manners, and by shows and representations, which were fitted to strike the imagination, to bring them to a greater awe and veneration for the laws and religion of their country; which, among the Pagans, was always regarded as a necessary ingredient in a virtuous character. Diodorus informs us that, in the Sicilian feasts of Ceres, which lasted ten days, was represented the ancient manner of living, before men had learned the use and culture of bread-corn.† This seems to have been designed to make men sensible of the value of a civilized life. It may be gathered from what is said by several of the ancients, that the principal subject of the Eleusinian mysteries was the life of Ceres, her wanderings after her daughter, and her legislation in Sicily and Africa, where she taught the inhabitants agriculture, and gave them laws, and thereby reclaimed them from their rude and uncultivated manners. It is not improbable, therefore, that occasion was taken from thence to represent, in the mysteries, the great benefit of laws, and the happy consequences of being brought from the wretchedness of a savage life, to humanity, civility, good manners, and politeness.‡ And this

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\* Apud August. de Civ. Dei, lib. x. cap. 32. p. 204.

† Diod. p. 200. Edit. Steph. as cited by Div. Leg. vol. I. p. 240. 2d Edit.

‡ Callimachus, in his hymn to Ceres, vers. 10. celebrates her as having given laws to cities, and taught men to cut down the ears of corn. Agreeable to this

is what Cicero seems to have particularly in view, in that noted passage on which our author lays a great stress. "Nam mihi cum multa divinaque videntur Athenæ peperisse, atque in vitâ hominum attulisse, tum nihil melius istis mysteriis, quibus ex agresti immanique vitâ, exculi ad humanitatem et mitigati sumus: neque solùm cum lætitia vivendi rationem accepimus; sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi." *De Legibus*, lib. ii. cap. 14. Here he highly praises the mysteries, for that by them we were reclaimed from a rude and savage life, and cultivated and softened into humanity: and that they are rightly called *initia*, the beginnings, because by them we have known, or became acquainted with the beginnings or first principles of life, (that is, of a humane and civilized life: for of this he is evidently speaking) and have been taught not only how to live pleasantly, but to die with a better hope. This relates to what was so carefully inculcated in the mysteries, that "those who were initiated not only lived in a state of greater happiness and security than other men, being under the immediate care and protection of the goddesses, but that after death they enjoyed far greater degrees of felicity than others, and were honoured with the first places in the Elysian abodes: whereas others were forced to lie and wallow in perpetual dirt, stink, and nastiness." \*

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is what Arnobius tells us, that the history of Ceres, and her teaching the people the use of corn, was the principal subject of the Eleusinian mysteries. *Adversus Gent.* lib. v. p. 185. Edit. Var. Lugd. Bat. St. Austin gives the same account from Varro, *De Civ. Dei*, lib. vii. cap. 20. p. 136. And Claudian, in the beginning of his Poem, *De Raptu Proserpinæ*, where he professes to open the secrets of the mysteries, plainly supposes the design of them to be, to represent Proserpine's being carried off by Pluto, Ceres' wandering after her daughter, her giving laws to the people where she went, and teaching them the use of corn instead of acorns.

\* Potter's *Antiq.* vol. I. p. 355. 1st Edit. This gave occasion to that sneer of Diogenes, the Cynic, when the Athenians urged him to be initiated, because those that were initiated had higher places in hades than other men; he answered, "That it was a ridiculous thing to suppose that Epaminondas and Agesilaus should lie in dirt and filthiness, whilst common men of no worth should be placed in the islands of the blessed." *Diog. Laërt.* lib. vi. segm. 30. Or, as Plutarch tells it, "Shall Patæcion the thief be in a better place after death than Epaminondas, because he was initiated?"

The true meaning of that passage in Cicero, which has been now mentioned, further appears by comparing it with a parallel passage at the end of his fifth book against Verres, cap. 72. "Teque Ceres et Libera, quarum sacra, sicut opiniones hominum et religiones ferunt, longè maximis atque occultissimis cæremoniis continentur, a quibus initia vitæ atque virtus, legum, morum, mansuetudinis, humanitatis exempla, hominibus ac civitatibus data ac dispersita esse dicuntur: quorum sacra populus Romanus a Græcis accepta et ascita, tantâ religione et publicè et privatim tuetur." Here, after having observed, that the *sacra* or holy rites of Ceres and Libera were contained in the most august and hidden ceremonies, he saith, that from thence the beginnings of life and of a proper diet, the examples of laws, manners, mildness, humanity, are said to have been given and imparted to men and cities. I shall here insert a note of the learned Adrian Turnebus, relating to this matter. "Initia vocantur ab initiis vitæ, inventis a Cerere legibus, in quarum rerum memoriam fiebant, cum antea ferino ritu homines sibi vitam propagabant. —That the mysteries were called *initia*, the beginnings, because they were instituted in memory of Ceres' having given men laws, and taught them the use of corn, whereby they began properly to live the life of men, whereas before they lived after the manner of wild beasts." \*

In the representations made in the mysteries of future rewards and punishments, matters were so contrived, that the virtues rewarded and vices punished were such as more immediately affected society; as our learned author has observed. And it is not improbable that these representations and shows, where a due care was taken to guard them against the abuses to which they were liable, might produce some good effects for the advantage of society, which is what the legislators and civil magistrates had principally in view. And yet some eminent Pagans seem not to have entertained very advantageous

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\* Turneb. Commentar. in Cicer. de Leg. lib. ii. c. 9. p. 338. Edit. Davies.

thoughts of the mysteries, with regard to their moral tendency. If Socrates had looked upon them as having a friendly influence on religion and virtue, he, who had its interests so much at heart, would not have declined being initiated; especially since he knew that by this he exposed himself to the calumnies of his enemies, and incurred the popular suspicion of being an irreligious and profane person. It is true that Socrates is introduced by Plato, in his *Phædo*, as giving a favourable interpretation of the design and intention of those mysteries: and indeed the extraordinary veneration they were had in among the people at Athens, as well as their being strongly supported by the civil magistrates and by the laws, would have made it very unsafe for him to have said the least thing to their disparagement. But his neglecting to be initiated is a much stronger proof that he had not a very good opinion of them, than any thing which can be produced to the contrary. \*

Whatever we suppose to have been the original intention of those mysteries, and allowing all that can be justly said in favour of them, there is, I think, great reason to apprehend that upon the whole they proved rather detrimental than advantageous to the cause of virtue. Our learned author himself acknowledges "that in Greece itself the mysteries became "abominably abused: a proof of which we have in the conduct of their comic writers, who frequently lay the scene of "their subject, such as the rape of a young girl, and the like,

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\* Socrates, in Plato's *Phædo*, says, concerning those who instituted and appointed the mysteries, that they were no mean or contemptible persons, ἡ φαύλοι τίνες, and that they taught, that "whosoever went to hades, without being expiated or initiated would lie in the dirt or filthiness, but that those who went thither purged "and initiated, would dwell with the gods." Plat. Oper. p. 380. F. Edit Lugd. 1590. The purification here referred to seems to have been the ritual purification prescribed in the mysteries: concerning which see Potter's *Antiq.* vol. I. p. 355. But Socrates, who was for taking advantage of this, intimates that it had probably a hidden meaning, and was designed to signify that it was necessary that the soul should be purified by virtue. He does not say that this was declared at the mysteries, but he supposes it, *αἰνέουσαν*, to be obscurely signified by those ceremonies of purgation.



“ at the celebration of the mysteries : as he shows from Fabricius.” And he observes, that “ in Cicero’s time, the terms “ mysteries and abomination, were almost synonymous.”\* It is true that the best institutions may be corrupted ; but the fault seems here to have been owing to a fundamental defect in the original constitution of them. “ We can assign no “ surer cause,” saith this eminent writer, “ of the horrid abuses “ and corruptions of the mysteries, than the *season* in which “ they were represented, and the profound silence in which “ they were buried. Night gave opportunity to wicked men “ to attempt evil actions, and the secrecy, encouragement to “ repeat them.”† He farther observes, that “ the mysteries “ were sometimes” (he might have said they were frequently) “ under the patronage of those deities, who were supposed to “ inspire and preside over sensual passions, such as Bacchus, “ Venus, and Cupid; for these had all their mysteries : and “ where was the wonder, if the initiated should be sometimes “ inclined to give a loose to those vices, in which the patron “ god was supposed to delight? And, in this case, the hidden “ doctrine came too late to put a stop to the disorder.”‡ And he there also mentions what he calls “ that very flagitious “ part of the mysterious rites when at worst, the carrying the “ ΚΤΕΙΣ and ΦΑΛΛΟΣ, in procession.”§ He says, indeed, that “ it was introduced, but under pretence of their being emblems “ of the mystical regeneration, and new life, into which the “ initiated had engaged themselves to enter.” But it is no way probable, that this was the original ground of introducing it, but a pretence invented for it after it was introduced ; for the same reason that they endeavoured to find out allegorical

\* Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 195. † Ibid. p. 190, 191. ‡ Ibid. p. 192.

§ He seems here to intimate, as if this part of the rites was not brought in till the latest and most corrupt times of the mysteries. But there is no proof of this. On the contrary, it seems to have been one of the most ancient rites used in the mysteries of Isis, from which the Eleusinian mysteries were derived. And Jamblichus himself, who was a very learned hierophant, and who undoubtedly was strongly inclined to give the most advantageous account of the mysteries, represents it to have been so, from the most ancient times.

meanings and physical explications for some other parts of the mysteries. And a most absurd pretence it was; as if such obscene rites, which shock common modesty, were fit emblems of inward purity, and of an entrance on a life of the strictest virtue. Arnobius justly exposes the absurdity of couching holy mysteries under obscene representations, on pretence that they had a profound and sacred meaning.\* And he applies this particularly to the Eleusinian mysteries.† I cannot therefore but think that whatever was the original intention of the mysteries, they were frequently so conducted as to have a most pernicious influence, in countenancing and heightening that impurity and dissoluteness of manners, which became so general in the Pagan world. And to them probably St Paul refers, when he saith, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which were done by them in secret." Eph. v. 12. And our learned author himself thinks this great apostle had the mysteries particularly in view, in what he saith concerning the wise men of the Gentiles, Rom. i. 20, et seq. That "God, in punishment for their *turning his truth into a lie*, suffered their mysteries, which they erected for a school of virtue, to degenerate into an odious sink of vice and immorality; giving them up unto all uncleanness and vile affections."‡

But not to insist longer upon this, what the subject we are upon leads us principally to consider is, whether and how far the mysteries were designed to detect the error of polytheism, and to instruct the initiated in the knowledge of the one true God. And as to this our learned author proposes to show that "the clear evidence of antiquity expressly informs us of these two particulars; that the errors of polytheism were detected, and the doctrine of the Unity taught and explained in the mysteries."§

One would expect, after such a declaration, that the proofs from antiquity, with respect to both these particulars, should

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\* See Arnob. advers. Gentes, his fifth book throughout.

† Ibid. and especially p. 173, et seq.

‡ Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 196. marg. note.

§ Ibid. p. 157.

be very clear. Let us therefore briefly consider the evidence that is produced.

The first thing proposed to be proved is, that the errors of polytheism were detected in the mysteries : or, as he elsewhere expresses it, that they discovered the whole delusion of polytheism to such as were judged capable of the secret. And he explains himself further, by saying, That the ἀποκρύπτειν, or secret doctrines of the mysteries, overthrew the vulgar polytheism, the worship of dead men : and that the fabulous gods, the whole rabble of licentious deities, were routed there.\* This representation of the design of the Pagan mysteries is very honourable to them, if it can be supported with clear evidence ; but it appears to me that not one of the testimonies produced for it, by the learned author of the Divine Legation, comes up to the point they are intended to prove. The first is a passage quoted from St. Austin, concerning an Egyptian hierophant, who informed Alexander the Great, that even the deities of an higher order had once been men.† This is followed by two quotations from Cicero, who, according to our author, tells us that “ not only the Eleusinian mysteries, but “ the Samothracian and the Lemnian, taught the error of “ polytheism.”‡ But all that can be gathered from the two passages here cited is, not that the error of the vulgar polytheism was taught in the mysteries, but only that the *dii majorum gentium*, the chief of the gods vulgarly adored, had been taken from the human race into heaven. But Cicero, who says this, neither gives it as his own opinion, nor represents it as the doctrine of the mysteries, that therefore they were not to be regarded as gods, nor to be worshipped as such. On the contrary, in one of those passages, he plainly approves the deification of famous and excellent men ; and so he does on several other occasions ; instances of which were produced above, p. 88. And the worship of such deities is

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\* The passages here referred to are quoted above, p. 152, 153.

† Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 157, 158.

‡ Ibid. p. 159, 160.

what he expressly prescribes in his book of laws. "Ex hoc minum genere consecratos coli lex jubet."\* Julius Firmicus, in the passage produced from him, charges the Pagans with having consecrated or deified dead men; but he is far from supposing that the mysteries condemned that practice, but rather on the contrary that they approved and encouraged it.† These are all the testimonies brought to prove that the mysteries were designed to detect the error and delusion of the vulgar polytheism: for as to the hint, as our author calls it, given by Plutarch, that the true nature of demons was held forth in the mysteries, since that philosopher does not explain what he means by it, but says a secret silence is to be observed, nothing can be concluded from it at all. The whole amount then of the evidence on this head is no more than this, that, in the mysteries, the initiated were instructed that the popular deities had been once men: but no proof is brought, that the *ἀνθρώπων* overthrew the vulgar polytheism,—the worship of dead men. Nor do I believe any one passage can be produced from all Pagan antiquity to shew that the design of the mysteries was to undeceive the people as to the vulgar polytheism, and to draw them off from the worship of the deities commonly adored. Their having been once men was very consistent, in the notions which then obtained, with their divinity. The Cretans, who, as this learned author observes from Diodorus, celebrated the mysteries openly, and published their *ἀνθρώπων*, or secret doctrines, that is, those which in other places were kept hidden or secret, without reserve, boasted of having Jupiter's tomb among them; but this did not hinder them from regarding and worshipping him as the chief of the deities, the father of gods and men.‡ In like manner the Egyptian priests, as Plutarch informs us, pretended to show the sepulchre of Osiris, yet this was not thought to be an objection against their worshipping him as a god.

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\* De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 8. p. 100. et cap. 11. p. 115. Edit. Davis.

† Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 162.

‡ Ibid. p. 183.

Allowing therefore the fact, that in the mysteries some account was given of the history of their gods, which led the initiated to conclude that the popular deities, even the principal of them, had been originally of the human race, it does not follow that, therefore, the mysteries were designed to detect the error and delusion of the vulgar polytheism, and to overthrow the worship of their deities. Some of the Pagans were indeed sensible that, if it was once allowed that their gods had been of human extraction, this might be turned to the disadvantage of the public religion. Hence it was, that the Roman pontiff, Scævola, in a passage cited before, was for having it concealed from the people, that even Hercules, Æsculapius, Castor, and Pollux, had been once mortal men, lest they should not regard and worship them as gods.\* And Plutarch, in his treatise *De Isid. et Osir.* speaking of those who represented some of the gods to have been originally famous men, who had obtained the honour of divinity, says that this is to attempt to move things which ought not to be stirred, and to bring down those great and venerable names from heaven to earth, and thereby to overturn and dissolve that religious persuasion, which hath taken possession of the minds of almost all men from their birth: that it is to open a wide door to the atheistical crowd, who are for turning divine things into human, and to give a splendid license to the illusions of Euhemerus, the Messenian, whom he there charges as having scattered all manner of atheism through the world.† It may seem a little surprising that Plutarch should here represent that as an impious and atheistical doctrine, which, according to our learned author, the mystagogues taught the initiated in the greater mysteries, and which Cicero and others made no scruple of declaring. But whatever Plutarch and some others might think of it, those that instituted and conducted the mysteries seem to have been of another mind. If they taught the initiated, that the gods commonly received had been once

\* Apud August. de Civit. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 27. p. 84.

† Plutarch. Oper. tom. II. p. 359, 360. Edit. Francof.

men, it is reasonable to suppose that they took care that the public religion should not suffer by it, by letting them know that notwithstanding this they ought to be regarded as gods, and to have that divine honour and worship rendered to them which ancient tradition and the laws required.

And indeed this seems plainly to follow from the concessions which our learned advocate for the mysteries is sometimes obliged to make. He tells us that one important use, to which what he calls *the detection of the national gods*, that is, the showing that they had been men, was designed, was “to excite men to heroic virtue, by showing them what honours the benefactors of nations had acquired by the free exercise of it.”\* The honours here referred to are *divine honours*, as he himself elsewhere calls them.† This also appears from the passage he quotes from Tully’s second book of laws, where it is ordered, that those should be worshipped whose merit had placed them in heaven: as also from the fragment of Sanchoniathon, which he supposes to have been the very history narrated to the *Ἐκπύται* in the greater mysteries.‡ He asks, “What stronger excitement had heroic minds, than to be taught, as they are in this fragment, that public benefits to their fellow creatures were rewarded with immortality?”§ It should have been said, that, according to that fragment, they were rewarded with divine honours: for it is there expressly said, that after their death they were worshipped as gods, and had sacrifices offered to them; of which several instances are given. And he represents it as “the purpose of that fragment to show that the popular deities were only dead men deified.”|| Now, the question is, Whether the

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\* Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 155, where he adds that “this was the chief reason why princes, statesmen, and leaders of colonies and armies, all aspired to be partakers of the greater mysteries.”

† Ibid. p. 183.

‡ Ibid. p. 168, 171.

§ Ibid. p. 173. And he there represents these things “as essential to the instruction of the mysteries;” and makes this an argument to prove that that history was composed for the use of the mysteries.

Ibid. p. 168, 169.

design of introducing the history of their gods, as having been deified men, was with a view to condemn the worshipping them, or to approve of it? It could not be to condemn it, since, by showing the divine honours which were rendered to them for the services they had done the public, they designed to excite men to heroic virtue. If this was one important use of the mysteries intended by the legislators and magistrates, as is plainly asserted in the passages now produced, this shows they did not intend by the mysteries to overthrow the worship that was rendered to them. For this would be to counteract and defeat their own design. And indeed this is what our author himself seems expressly to grant; when speaking of what Virgil calls

“ Vana superstitio, veterumque ignara deorum,”

he saith, that “ the Pagan lawgiver took much care to rectify “ it in the mysteries, not by destroying that species of idolatry, “ —the worship of dead men, which was indeed his own invention, but by showing why they paid that worship, namely, “ for benefits done by those deified heroes to the whole race “ of mankind.” \* Here it is declared that the Pagan lawgiver did not intend by the mysteries to destroy the worship of dead men, but rather to give a reason for it, which tended to justify that practice. And if this were the case, I do not see how it can be said, that “ what the ἀνέγκλητα overthrew was “ the vulgar polytheism,—the worship of dead men.” † Where the reader may observe, that the *vulgar polytheism* and the *worship of dead men*, are used as synonymous terms.

I think these observations are sufficient to show that the testimonies brought to prove that the popular deities were once men, and were represented as such in the mysteries, do not prove that the mysteries were intended to detect the error and delusion of polytheism, and to subvert the worship of those deities. This indeed was the inference the Christians drew from it, who argued from the history of their gods to disprove

\* Div. Leg. p. 221.

† Ibid. p. 155.

their divinity.\* And this probably was the principal reason, why the mystagogues were very careful in their entrance on the celebration of the mysteries, that no Christian should be present at them.

Let us now proceed to examine the proofs which are brought for the second particular, That the doctrine of the Unity, or of the one God, the Creator and Governor of the world, was taught in the mysteries.† This is what the celebrated writer, in the passages above referred to, expressly affirms to be clear from the evidence of antiquity. To the same purpose he elsewhere observes, that “the Creator of all things was the subject “ of the *ἀπόκρυφα*, or secret in all the mysteries throughout the “ Gentile world.”‡ And again, that “the knowledge of the “ true God was taught, though to few, all over the Gentile “ world, and only in the mysteries.”§ But though I will not pretend to affirm that no such doctrine was taught there, yet this, I think, may be safely said, that there is no sufficient evidence brought to prove it.

The testimonies first produced are two of Clemens Alexandrinus, and one of Chrysippus. || But all that can be gathered from them is, that the mysteries treated of divine matters, of the nature of the gods, and of the universe: but they have not one word to show that the doctrine of the Unity was taught there. Nor is the passage produced from Strabo more express. It is true that Strabo there saith, that “the secret “ celebration of the mysteries preserves the majesty due to the “ divinity, and at the same time imitates its nature, which “ hides itself from our senses.” But by the divinity he does not seem there to understand the one supreme God, as dis-

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\* What Theophilus Antiochenus said to his heathen friend Autolycus, “the names of the gods thou professest to worship are the names of dead men,—Τὰ « μὲν ἰσχυράτα δὲ φῶς εἰς εἶναι δὲ τῶν ἰσχυράτα ἔστι νεκρῶν ἀνθρώπων,” of which he there gives many instances, was the charge constantly urged by the Christians in their disputes against the heathens. Theoph. ad Autol. lib. i. p. 75.

† Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 163, et seq.

‡ Ibid. p. 166.

§ Ibid. p. 168.

|| Ibid. ubi supra, p. 163.



tinguished from inferior deities, but the divinity in whose name and to whose honour the mysteries were celebrated; and he immediately after makes mention of Apollo, Ceres, and Bacchus, as the deities sacred among the Greeks, to each of whom, according to the prevailing theology, divinity was ascribed. And whereas our learned author adds that Strabo makes philosophy "the object of the mysteries, which," he thinks, "removes all ambiguity." I cannot find, upon a careful examination of the passage as it lies in the original, that Strabo there represents philosophy as the object about which the mysteries are conversant. But allowing it to be so, since he does not explain what philosophy it was, it would still leave us in the dark. For that the philosophers were far from agreeing in their notions of the Divinity, sufficiently appears from Cicero's celebrated book, *De Natura Deorum*. \* The passage that followeth this is from Plutarch, who, in his treatise of Isis and Osiris, speaking of the temple of Isis, pretends to give the etymology of the name, that it is called 'Ισιον, because those that approach it with prudence and sanctity shall know the τὸ ὅν. This is Plutarch's own gloss upon it; and that it is not much to be depended upon will appear to any man that impartially considers the nature and design of that treatise. "It was directly written to support the national religion, which had taken the alarm. His purpose in it is to show that all its multiform worship was only an address to the supreme Being, under various names and covers." This is the account our learned author himself gives of it, and he has very well exposed Plutarch's scheme, and the shifts he was put upon to support it. † And indeed the reading of that book of Plutarch, though it abounds with variety of learning, is sufficient to convince any thinking man of the strange confusion of the Pagan theology, especially that of the Egyptians, which was most admired, and from which many other nations derived theirs.

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\* *Div. Leg.* p. 164.

† *Ibid.* vol. II. p. 308, 309. Edit. 4th.

The next testimony is from Galen : speaking of the benefit that would arise not only to the physician, but to the philosopher, who labours to investigate the universal nature, from considering the parts of the human body, he says, that “those who initiate themselves here have nothing like it in the Eleusinian or Samothracian mysteries—οὐδὲν ὅμοιον ἔχουσιν Ἐλευσινίοις τε καὶ Σαμοθρακίοις ἁγίοις.” Galen seems here to intimate, that the Divine Nature was treated of in the mysteries; but says nothing from whence we can form a judgment, whether they were designed to instruct men in the Unity, or what kind of doctrine was taught there; only that it was not to be compared to that which was to be learned from considering the human body; which is the subject of his excellent book, *De Usu Partium*.

The passage which is next produced is from Eusebius. And it seems a little odd, that, because Eusebius makes use of some terms employed in the Pagan mysteries, he should be brought in as a voucher, that the doctrine of the Unity was taught in those mysteries. For this very passage shows the contrary. Eusebius expressly says, that “for the Hebrew people alone was reserved the honour of being initiated into the knowledge of God the Creator of all things, and of being instructed in the practice of true piety towards him.”\* And it sufficiently appears from what he afterwards says of the Pagan mysteries, that he was far from thinking that the doctrine of the one true God was taught there.†

But what this learned writer seems to lay the principal stress upon is the testimony of Josephus, than which, he says, nothing can be more explicit. But I must confess, it does not appear so to me. Josephus is there vindicating the Jews against the calumnies of Apion, and shows the advantages they enjoyed for the knowledge and practice of religion and piety above other nations. The Gentiles boasted mightily of their initiations and mysteries, which were regarded as the

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\* Div. Leg. vol. I. p. 165.

† Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 9.

most sacred part of their religion. Josephus, who appears throughout all his works to be very careful not to give offence to the Gentiles, says nothing to the disparagement of their mysteries, which they would not have borne; but supposing them to be as holy and divine as they would have them to be, he observes that they only returned at certain seasons, and were solemnized for a few days; whereas the Jews, by the benefit of their sacred rites and laws, enjoyed all the advantages pretended to in those mysteries, through the whole course of their lives. This seems to be the genuine sense and scope of this passage. But it is observable that Josephus does not enter upon the consideration of the nature and design of those mysteries, or the doctrines that were taught there; though he is very plain and express in the account he gives of the principles the Jews were taught in their laws, particularly relating to the one true absolutely perfect God, the sole Cause of all existence.\* I think therefore this passage affords no valid argument to prove that the doctrine of the Unity was taught in the mysteries. Nor do I see how it can well be supposed, that a Jewish priest should be a competent witness to inform us of what was the principal secret of the Pagan mysteries, and which they were bound under the most tremendous seal of secrecy not to reveal.

These are all the testimonies produced by this admired writer when he professedly undertakes to prove that the doctrine of the Unity, or of the one true God, in opposition to the Pagan polytheism, was taught in the mysteries. And I think it may be left to any impartial reader, whether they sufficiently prove this point. But there is another thing which he urgeth afterwards, which, if it could be depended upon, would be much more to his purpose than any of the testimonies he had mentioned: and that is, the Hymn of Orpheus, mentioned by Clemens Alexandrinus, in which the doctrine of the Unity is plainly asserted, and which he endeavours to

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\* Div. Leg. vol. I. p. 166.

show was the very hymn that was sung to the initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries, by the hierophant, habited like the Creator. But it by no means appears that Clement intended to signify that that song made a part of the mysteries. He takes notice indeed of a poem made by Orpheus on the mysteries, and which he supposes to have contained an account of those mysteries, and of the theology of idols. And he also mentions the hymn in question, which he supposes likewise to have been composed by Orpheus, and which contained a quite contrary doctrine. But he does not seem to mean that this hymn was a part of that poem in which Orpheus gave an account of the mysteries, but rather to have looked upon it as a distinct poem composed by Orpheus afterwards, and in which he supposes him to have recanted the doctrines he had taught in the former. This appears to me to be a just account of Clement's meaning, and must be allowed to be so, if we would make that learned father consistent with himself. His manner of introducing it is remarkable. "The Thracian hierophant," says he, "and who was at the same time a poet, Orpheus, the son of Oeager, after he had opened or explained the mysteries and the theology of idols, introduces the truth, and makes his recantation; singing, though late, a truly holy song."\* Here Clement seems plainly to oppose these verses to the account Orpheus had given of the mysteries, and makes them to be in effect a palinodia, or recantation of the whole theology of the mysteries, which he calls the theology of idols. But he represents him as late in making this recantation and singing this holy song. And I do not well see upon what ground this could be said, if that very song made a part of the mysteries, and was sung by the hierophant himself, at the very time of the celebration of those mysteries, and before the assembly was dismissed. For,

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\* "Ὁ δὲ Θράκιος ἱεροφάντης καὶ ποιητὴς ἄρμα, ὁ τοῦ Οὐαγρεῦ Ὀρφεὺς μετὰ τὴν  
 "τῶν ἱεροφαντῶν καὶ τῶν εἰδώλων τὴν θιολογίαν παλινωδίας ἀληθείας εἰσάγει, τὸν  
 "ἱερὸν ὄντως ἐπὶ πᾶσι ὅμοις ὃ οὗτος ἄλλων λόγῳ." Clem. Admonitio ad Gent. p. 63,  
 64. Edit. Potter.

at that rate, the verses were sung in the proper season in which they ought to be sung, according to the course and order of the mysteries. Our learned author, indeed, has translated the latter part of that passage differently from what I have done. "The sacreds then truly begin, though late, and thus he enters upon the matter." This seems to imply that the hymn referred to properly belonged to the mysteries, and made the most solemn and venerable part of them: but I see nothing in the original that can answer to those words in his translation, "the sacreds then truly begin." Nor can I suppose that, if Clement had believed this hymn, which he himself produces, as containing a clear acknowledgment of the one true God, to have been a part, and the most sacred part of the mysteries, he would have called those mysteries, as he does in a passage to be produced afterwards, "the mysteries of atheists;" or say of those who celebrated and conducted them, that "they do not acknowledge him, who is truly and really God." To all which it may be added, that this hymn of Orpheus is very justly suspected, as would have appeared if the whole had been produced. It is only the first part of it which is cited by our learned author from Clement's admonition to the Gentiles. But it is given more largely by the same Clement in his *Stromata*;<sup>\*</sup> and at still greater length by Eusebius,<sup>†</sup> who quotes it from Aristobulus, a Jewish peripatetic philosopher. And this philosopher produces it to show that Orpheus and the Greeks took their doctrine of God the Creator of the universe from the books of Moses. And indeed some of the verses cited from this poem seem plainly to point to Moses, and describe him as having been drawn out of the water, and as having received the law from God in two tables: and others of them relate no less plainly to Abraham, to whom Clement applies them. The learned Dr. Cudworth, though very willing to catch at any

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<sup>\*</sup> Clem. *Strom.* v. *Oper.* p. 723, et seq.

<sup>†</sup> *Præp. Evangel.* lib. xiii. cap. 12.

thing in a Pagan writer that favours the doctrine of the Unity, pronounces these verses to be a manifest forgery, and so far suspects some other of the verses ascribed to Orpheus, and produced by the fathers, that he thinks it not ingenuous to lay a stress upon them; and therefore declares that he will produce no verses of Orpheus as an acknowledgment of the one supreme Being, but such as are attested by Pagan writers.\* And even the authority of these is of no great weight. Many learned persons, both ancient and modern, have been of opinion that we have no verses of Orpheus remaining which can be depended upon as his. As to the hymn's being sung by the hierophant, habited like the Creator, this is advanced without any proof. And as in that case it must have related to the most sacred part of the hidden doctrine of the mysteries, and which, by our author's hypothesis, was communicated by the hierophant only to a few of the initiated under the most tremendous seal of secrecy, it is hard to conceive how it should come to be openly published to the world, so that the Jews and Christians should know it.† We are told indeed by Eusebius, that the hierophant, in the Eleusinian mysteries, put on the habit of the demiurgus.‡ But supposing this to be understood of the Maker or Former of the world, it is no sufficient proof that the proper doctrine of the Unity was taught in the mysteries. Ovid, whom the author of the Divine Legation represents as having been very well acquainted with the Pagan theology, and as having exhibited a beautiful system of it in his *Metamorphoses*, has given an account of the creation of the world in his first book. He attributes it to God, whom he calls *mundi Fabricator*, and *ille Opifex rerum, mundi melioris Origo*—which contains a full explication of the word *Δημιουργός*. Yet it does not appear

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\* Intel. Syst. p. 300, 301.

† There are among the works ascribed by heathen writers to Orpheus, some hymns said to have been sung at the mysteries; but these are hymns to particular deities, and do not relate to what is supposed to be the great secret of the mysteries. See Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 179.

‡ Præp. Evangel. lib. iii. cap. 12. p. 117.

that he acknowledged the Unity in the sense here pretended. On the contrary he supposes a plurality of gods, and that the world was made by one of them, but which of them to ascribe it to he could not tell.

"Quisquis fuit ille deorum."\*

I think it appears from what has been offered, that "there is no clear evidence of antiquity which expressly informs us, that the doctrine of the Unity was taught and explained in the mysteries:" which is what our author proposed to show.† And I am persuaded that, if there had been any such evidence, it could not have escaped the sagacity and diligence of this very acute and learned writer. But, supposing it clearly proved, this could not have had any great influence on the state of religion in the Pagan world, as will appear from two considerations.

I. There is great reason to think that the notion given of the Deity in the mysteries was not a very right and just one. It will be afterwards shown that the philosophers were, for the most part very wrong in their notions of the Divinity; and it can hardly be supposed that the civil magistrates and great men of the state knew more of this matter than the philosophers. It has been observed, that the Cretans published the secret doctrines of the mysteries, and consequently the Unity, if this was one of them, to all that had a desire to know them. But if the Cretans acknowledged any one god supreme above the rest, it was Jupiter, whose tomb they pretended to have among them, and whom they regarded and celebrated as the father of gods and men, the ruler and lord of all.—"Αρχων

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\* The Pagan writers sometimes speak of one maker of the world, and sometimes they represent the gods as the makers of the world. "O Jupiter, and the gods, the fathers and makers of the earth and sea.—Ω Ζεῦ καὶ θεῶν πατέρες καὶ ποιηταὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης." Max. Tyr. Dissert. 34. See also Phurnut. De Nat. Deor. p. 3. In an inscription on an Egyptian obelisk the sun is stiled, "Κτίστης τῆς οἰκουμένης—the framer or opificer of the world." Fuller Miscel. Sacra, lib. i. cap. 14. And in the Orphic verses, cited by Macrobius, he is represented as the father of sea and land. Saturnal. lib. i. cap. 23.

† Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 157.

καὶ κυρίως πάντων," as Plutarch in his tract *De Isid. et Osir.* represents their sense.\* As to the Egyptians, from whom other nations are said to have derived their mysteries, their wise men were much divided in their opinions concerning the Deity. Porphyry tells us that the Egyptians called the demiurgus, or Maker of the world, Kneph, whom they represented in a human form.† But the same Porphyry, in his epistle to Anebo, an Egyptian priest, says, that Chæremon and other learned Egyptians held the sun to be the demiurgus, to whom they attributed the formation of all things, and did not acknowledge any incorporeal author of the universe. See Euseb. *Præp. Evangel.* lib. iii. cap. 11. p. 115. compared with lib. iii. cap. 4. p. 92. and cap. 13. p. 119. Plutarch informs us, from Hecataeus, that the Egyptians regarded the *ἡ ἀρχὴ*, or the universe, to be the first or supreme God. And Apuleius, in his account of the sacred mysteries of Isis, calls her "*rerum natura parens*;" which our author says, "shows plainly what were the *ἀπόκρυφα*, or secret doctrines of all the "mysteries." And he elsewhere observes that "the universal nature was disguised under divers names, and called by "the Egyptians the queen Isis." *Div. Leg.* ubi supra, p. 203 and 315.

II. The second consideration is this, that supposing them to have taught just notions of God in the mysteries, it was of no great use, because they taught this part of the secret doctrine of the mysteries to a very few. This appears from some of the passages already produced, to which I shall add two more, which are very express to this purpose. The one is in *Div. Leg.* vol. I. p. 166, marg. note, where it is said that the

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\* Plut. *Oper.* tom. II. p. 381. D.

† Kneph seems, by Plutarch's account, to have been the god that was particularly adored by the people of Thebais. Porphyry represents him as in a human form; but in the fragment of Sanchoniathon, preserved by Eusebius, it is said as from the sacred books of Taautus, that he attributed a divine virtue to the serpent, which the Phœnicians called a good demon, and the Egyptians called him Kneph, whom they represented as a serpent with a hawk's head. Euseb. *Præp. Evang.* lib. i. cap. 10. p. 41.



knowledge of God was communicated "to a few select Gentiles in these mysteries, celebrated in secret—which not being done in order to give him glory, by promoting his public and general worship, was done in vain." The other is *ibid.* p. 196, 197. marg. note, where what St. Paul says of Gentile sages is applied to the mysteries, that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, by preaching him up to the people, but carried away in the vanity of their imagination, by a mistaken principle of politics, that a vulgar knowledge of him would be injurious to society, shut up his glory in their mysteries, and gave the people in exchange for an *incorruptible God, an image made like to corruptible man and birds,*" &c. It is there also observed, that what the apostle saith, that they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, "was strictly true with regard to the mysteries. The Creator was there acknowledged by a small and select number of the participants; but the general and solemn worship, in these celebrations, was to their national idols."

## CHAP. IX.

*Some farther considerations to show that the design of the mysteries was not to detect the errors of the Pagan polytheism. The legislators and magistrates who instituted and conducted the mysteries, were themselves the chief promoters of the popular polytheism from political views, and therefore it is improbable that they intended secretly to subvert it by the mysteries. Their scheme, upon such a supposition, absurd and inconsistent. The mysteries were, in fact, of no advantage for reclaiming the heathens from their idolatries. The primitive Christians not to be blamed for the bad opinion they had of the Pagan mysteries.*

THE observations which have been made may perhaps be judged sufficient to show that little stress can be laid upon the boasted expedient supposed to have been contrived by the civil magistrate for detecting the error of polytheism, and instructing men in the knowledge of the one true God. But it may be of use to add some farther considerations on this subject.

And here it is proper to take notice of an argument, which the celebrated author of the Divine Legation seems to regard as a plain proof, that the mysteries were designed to detect and overthrow the error of the vulgar polytheism. He observes that what the legislators and civil magistrates had principally in view in instituting and conducting the mysteries, was the promoting the practice of virtue among the people for the good of the society. "But there was one insuperable obstacle to it, the vicious examples of their gods. It was therefore necessary to remedy this evil, which they did by striking at the root of it. The mystagogue taught the initiated, that Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Mars, and the whole rabble of licentious deities, were indeed only dead mortals, subject in life to the same passions and vices with themselves. The fabulous gods being thus routed, the supreme Cause of all things took their place," &c. See the passage quoted at large above, p. 152.

I readily agree, with this learned writer, that the ill effect of the vicious examples of the gods could not be effectually prevented, but by overturning the vulgar polytheism, and dis-

carding the popular deities. But the ancient heathens were of a different opinion. Some of them made no scruple of declaring their disapprobation of the vicious actions ascribed to their gods in the poetical fables: and yet it does not appear that they were for rejecting the deities themselves, to whom those actions were ascribed, or turning the people from the worship of them. As, by our author's acknowledgment, they were only the poetical stories about the vicious actions of the gods, that, in their opinion, made polytheism hurtful to the state, they thought they might still maintain the established deities in the worship which was rendered to them according to the laws, and yet prevent the ill influence of those fables upon the people. To this purpose it was pretended, that those stories were not to be understood in the gross literal sense; and that they had a hidden meaning contained under them. Of this we have a specimen in the physical explication given by Varro of the story of Proserpine's having been ravished by Pluto, which was one of the things represented in the Eleusinian mysteries.\* This was undoubtedly a fundamental defect in their scheme. For whilst the poetical mythology kept its place in the public religion and worship, and the stories and ancient traditions concerning the gods were held sacred among the people, no physical or allegorical interpretations, which were for the most part strained, could prevent the ill influence which the literal and obvious meaning would naturally have upon them. And for this reason among others it could scarce be expected that the mysteries should have a good effect, in rectifying the religion or morals of the people. They were by no means intended to abolish the public system of polytheism, and whilst that continued in force with which those fables were so closely interwoven, all attempts to defeat the bad effects of them were ineffectual and vain.

That the mysteries were not designed to overthrow the vul-

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\* Apud August. De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 20. p. 156. Edit. Bened.

gar polytheism, may, I think, be fairly argued from this consideration, that the legislators and civil magistrates who first instituted the mysteries, and continued to have the chief direction of them, "had," as our learned author observes, "the chief hand in the rise of the vulgar polytheism, and contrived that polytheism for the sake of the state, to keep the people in awe, and under a greater veneration for their laws."\* And could it be expected from such legislators and magistrates, that they, who by his own acknowledgment, regarded not *truth* but *utility*,† should, in good earnest, attempt to draw the people off from that polytheism which they themselves had encouraged and established for the welfare of the state, and to keep the people under a greater veneration for the laws? After having said that "the fabulous gods were routed in the mysteries, and that the initiated were taught the doctrine of the Unity, the supreme Cause of all things," he observes, that "these were the truths, which Varro tells us, it was inexpedient for the people to know, imagining the error of the vulgar polytheism to be so inveterate, that it was not to be expelled without throwing the society into convulsions."‡ And any one that duly considers the maxims by which the ancient legislators and great men of the state governed themselves, will not readily believe that they were capable of forming a scheme, the tendency of which was, in their opinion, to throw the society into convulsions. If it be urged, that this was the very reason of their "discovering

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\* Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 156.

† Speaking of the hidden doctrines of the schools of philosophy, and those of the mysteries of religion, he says "they could not be the same, because their ends were very different: the end of philosophy being only truth, the end of religion only utility." p. 151. And, in a marginal note, *ibid.* it is said concerning the legislator and civil magistrate, that "whilst he was too little solicitous about truth, he encouraged a polytheism destructive of society, to regulate which, he, successfully however, employed the mysteries." With what success these mysteries were employed to regulate the vulgar polytheism, sufficiently appears from the observations which I have here made, and shall further make upon this subject.

‡ Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 155, 156.

“the delusion of polytheism in the mysteries only to such of the initiated as were judged capable of the secret;” and that “this being supposed the shaking foundations, was to be done with all possible circumspection, and under the most tremendous seal of secrecy;”<sup>\*</sup> let us see whether this will account for the conduct of the legislators and magistrates, and render their scheme consistent. Upon this view of it the expedient must stand thus: the legislators and magistrates, being convinced of the error and evil tendency of the vulgar polytheism, and yet being persuaded that it would be dangerous to the state to let this be generally known, contrived the mysteries, in which the initiated were to be instructed, that the deities commonly adored were no gods but only dead men, and that there is only one true God, the Creator and Governor of the world; and at the same time were to be laid under the strictest obligations to keep this to themselves, and not to divulge it. The language of the mystagogue to the initiated must therefore be supposed to have been to this purpose:—I am now going to reveal to you a thing which is of the highest importance to you to know, because I look upon you to be persons fit to be entrusted with the secret; and that is, that those which are commonly esteemed gods, and the worship of which makes up the public religion of the state, are not gods, nor ought to be regarded as such: that they are only dead men: that this rabble of licentious deities, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Mars, and others of the like sort, ought to be routed and discarded; and that you should acknowledge and adore the one only God, the Creator and Governor of the universe. But then you are bound by the most sacred oaths and engagements to keep what I now tell you an inviolable secret. To reveal it would expose you to the divine vengeance, and to the capital punishments denounced by the laws against the

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<sup>\*</sup> He goes on to show that they were taught that the gods would punish the revealers of the secret, and not only them but the hearers of it too: besides which the state decreed capital punishments against the betrayers of the mysteries. *Div. Leg. ubi supra*, p. 180.

betrayers of the mysteries; and it would be of the most pernicious consequence to spread this doctrine among the people. You must still go on to worship the popular gods as before, and must never attempt the least alteration in the established religion and worship.

This appears to me to be a strange inconsistent scheme. And it is hard to conceive what the legislator could propose by so odd and unaccountable a management. It was not the virtue of a few individuals but of the society in general that he must be supposed to have in view: and how could this end be answered by committing the secret, which is supposed to be of such importance to the morals of the people, only to a few of the initiated, who were at the same time brought under the most solemn engagements not to discover it? And even as to those few to whom the secret was communicated, to what purpose would it be to instruct them in doctrines they were not to make use of? Or, what opinion could they have of the honesty of those that should instruct them to despise those popular deities, whom yet they would have them publicly adore? And who should discover to them the delusion of the vulgar polytheism, and the falsehood of the religion of their country, and yet urge it upon them as a duty to conform to it? If the mysteries were founded upon such a plan, it is not to be wondered at, that they had little effect on the minds and manners of men.

But I cannot bring myself to believe that the legislators ever intended, that there should be any thing in the mysteries which should expose the established religion and worship to contempt. If Virgil has, according to our author's most ingenious conjecture, made a genuine representation of the mysteries, in the 6th book of his *Æneid*, "*non temnere divos*—" "*not to contemn the gods*," was a lesson carefully inculcated there.\* Instead of being intended to prejudice persons

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\* It was one of the laws of Charondas, as Stobæus informs us, "Let the contempt of the gods be reckoned among the greatest crimes." Stob. serm. 42.

against the religion of their country, it is reasonable to believe that they were rather designed to strengthen their attachment to it; and by shows and striking representations, fitted to work upon the imaginations of the people, to impress them with a greater awe and veneration for their deities. Accordingly it is observable, that those who were most zealous for the mysteries, were wont also to manifest the greatest zeal for the Pagan religion; and they who were enemies to the Pagan polytheism, as the primitive Christians universally were, had a very bad opinion of the mysteries.

That they were not intended to subvert, by their secret doctrines, the vulgar polytheism, may be farther argued from this consideration, that these mysteries were, according to this learned writer, "under the presidency of various gods, and were celebrated in their names, and to their honour." He names Isis and Osiris, Mythras, the mother of the gods, Bacchus, Venus, Jupiter, Ceres, and Proserpina, Castor and Pollux, Vulcan, and many others.\* And he observes that "each of the Pagan gods had (besides the public and open) a secret worship paid unto him: to which none were admitted but those who had been selected by preparatory ceremonies, called *initiations*. This secret worship was termed the mysteries. But though every god had, besides his *open* worship the *secret* likewise, yet this latter did not *every where* attend the former, but only *there* where he was the patron god, or in principal esteem."† I think it hence follows, that there was only this difference between the public worship of those gods, and that rendered to them in the mysteries, that the latter was attended with some peculiar circumstances, and performed in a more solemn manner, not by all promiscuously, but by those who, by a particular initiation, were prepared for it. The mysteries therefore were not designed to discard the worship of those deities, but to add a greater solemnity to it. And particularly they were intended for the

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\* Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 138.

† Ibid. p. 137.

honour of the patron deity, and were celebrated in places where he "was had in principal esteem." But how could it be said, that in the mysteries the secret worship of those deities was celebrated, if the design of the secret doctrine of those mysteries was to show that they were no gods, and that no worship was due to them at all? And indeed if the people had the least suspicion that this was the design of the secret doctrine taught in the mysteries, far from regarding them with so profound a veneration, they would have had them in abhorrence.\* The Athenians, who expelled Anaxagoras and put Socrates to death, for showing, as they supposed, a disrespect to the religion and gods of their country, would never have endured mysteries, in which the initiated were taught the error of polytheism, and whose ἀποθέματα overthrew the worship of the gods commonly adored, and even of those to whose honour the mysteries were celebrated. It was for seeming, in a drunken frolic, to make a mock of the holy mysteries, and for offending the goddesses, Ceres and Proserpina, to whom they were consecrated, that Alcibiades had the judgment of death passed upon him, and which would certainly have been inflicted, if he had not saved himself by flight. The rage the people of Athens were put into by this, and by the breaking the images of Mercury, which happened at the same time, and the numbers that were put to death on the account of it, show how very zealous they were for the honour of their gods, and that they thought it an execrable impiety and profaneness to do any thing which tended to cast contempt on the popular deities, or their images, and sacred rites. A particular account of this may be seen in Plutarch's life of Alcibiades.

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\* Every citizen of Athens was bound by oath to defend and conform to the religion of his country. This oath was in the name of the gods, and concluded thus: I swear by these following deities, the Agrauli, Enyalios, Mars, Jupiter, the Earth, and Diana. See Potter's Greek Antiquities, vol. I. p. 141, 142. 1st edit. And to have taught them, though in the most secret way, that the gods they had sworn by were no gods, would have been looked upon as an attempt to subvert the commonwealth at the foundations, and to dissolve the sanction and obligatory force of those oaths, which were thought to be the most powerful bands of the public safety and security.



To all this may be added an argument from fact and experience, which seems to me to be of great force, and that is, that though the mysteries were generally celebrated in almost all the heathen nations, and especially throughout the whole Roman empire, no effect of them appear in turning any of the people from their polytheism and idolatry. He talks indeed, in a passage cited above, of the legislator's having "successfully employed" the mysteries for regulating the vulgar polytheism. But how is this proved? Can any instances be produced of persons that were converted from the public idolatry and polytheism by the mysteries? Notwithstanding this boasted expedient it still kept its ground, and made a continual progress among the Gentiles. The argument will receive an additional strength and force, if applied to the case of the Athenians. Athens was the principal seat of the Eleusinian, which were esteemed the most sacred and venerable of all the mysteries. There they were thought to be best understood, and to be celebrated in their greatest purity, and in the most religious and solemn manner. All the Athenians in general were initiated. It might therefore have been expected, that, if the design of the mysteries had been such as is represented, it would have inspired some of them with a secret contempt of their deities, and of the common polytheism: and that this, in time and by degrees, would have wrought a remarkable change among them. But the contrary is manifest from their whole history. They seem rather to have been more and more devoted to their idolatries and superstitions. Nor had their polytheism ever been at a greater height, than at the time of our Saviour's appearing.

The last thing I shall observe concerning the mysteries, and which I confess has no small weight with me, is, that, if the design of them had been such as the right reverend and learned author of the Divine Legation of Moses represents it, it is unconceivable that the ancient Christian writers should have so universally exclaimed against them, as he owns they did.

It may be reasonably supposed, that, considering the great

number of persons which were converted from heathenism to Christianity, in the first ages of the Christian church, many of whom were of considerable parts and learning, there were not a few who had been admitted both to the lesser and greater mysteries, and were therefore well acquainted with the nature and design of them. And though, whilst they continued Pagans, they might have thought themselves obliged not to reveal the secret doctrines which had been taught in the mysteries, yet, upon their embracing Christianity, they would not have looked upon themselves to be any longer under engagements to keep the secret. If they knew that in the mysteries men were brought under the most solemn obligations to a holy and virtuous life, and not only so, but that the secret doctrine taught in the most sacred part of the mysteries was designed to detect the error of polytheism, to rout the fabulous deities, and to turn men from idols to the one true supreme God, they must have had a good opinion of them, as so far at least coinciding with the design of Christianity. Why then did they not insist upon this, in their apologies for the Christian religion, and, in their disputes with the heathens, argue from their own mysteries against the popular idolatry? On the contrary, in discourses addressed to the heathens themselves, they frequently speak of the mysteries in terms of the utmost abhorrence, as impure and abominable,\* and as

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\* Severe reflections have been made by several authors on the ancient fathers for what they have said against the mysteries. And yet that these were, in many instances, extremely corrupted, sufficiently appears from many express testimonies of the Pagan writers themselves, notwithstanding the strong bias they had in their favour. Apuleius, in that work of his which was designed to recommend the Pagan religion and mysteries, represents the mysteries of Cybele and the Syrian goddess in an abominable light; and though he highly extols those of Isis, other Pagan writers give a bad account of them. Juvenal makes no scruple to call them.

"Isiacæ sacraria lenæ." Satyr. vi. vers. 488.

Our learned author himself mentions "the horrid abuses and corruptions of the "mysteries," and owns that they "degenerated into an odious sink of vice and

rather tending to confirm the people in their idolatry, than to draw them off from it. The making such odious representations of the mysteries, supposing they knew the design of them to be what this learned writer represents it (and if it had been so, some of them must have known it) would have been absolutely inconsistent with common honesty and ingenuity: nor can I believe that such good and excellent persons, as many of the primitive Christians undoubtedly were, could have been capable of such a conduct.

It were easy to produce many testimonies from them, in relation to the mysteries: but it may be sufficient to mention what Clemens Alexandrinus says upon this subject, who was a man of learning and probity. In his exhortation to the Gentiles he insists pretty largely upon the mysteries, and introduces it by declaring that he will give a true account of them, and will not be ashamed to speak plainly of those things which they are not ashamed to worship. He speaks all along like one that was well acquainted with those mysteries, who knew what the symbols of them were, and the things which were there represented and exhibited. And it appears from the account he gives, that the representations made in the mysteries were agreeable to the fables of the poets and mythologists, concerning Jupiter, Ceres, Proserpina, Bacchus, and other deities: that, in the Eleusinian sacra, they celebrated the rape of Proserpina, the lamentations of Ceres, her wanderings in quest of her daughter, her congress with Jupiter, and supplications to him, with several other things which were both ridiculous and obscene. He calls those who brought those mysteries from Egypt into Greece "the fathers of an execrable superstition: who sowed the seed of wickedness" and corruption, σπέρμα κακίας καὶ φθοράς, in human life: and

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"immorality." Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 190 and p. 196. marg. note. This was the state they were generally in, when the fathers spoke of them. And it is not much to be wondered at, if this created a strong prejudice in their minds against the original design of the mysteries, and the persons who first instituted them.

“ says, the mysteries were full of delusion and portentous representations, calculated to impose upon the people, ἀπάτης καὶ τερατείας ἔμπλεα.”\* He concludes his account of them with saying, “ these are the mysteries of atheistical men. I may rightly call those atheists, who are destitute of the knowledge of him who is truly God, and most impudently worship a boy discerped, or torn in pieces by the Titans, a woman lamenting, and the parts which modesty forbids to name.” And he repeats it again, that they are ignorant of God, ἀγνοῦσι τὸν Θεόν, and do not acknowledge that God who really is or exists. †

This whole account of the heathen mysteries given by Clemens is transcribed and approved by Eusebius, who was himself a very able judge. And he introduces it by observing that Clemens knew these mysteries by his own experience. ‡ The account which Arnobius, who had been a learned Pagan, gives of the mysteries, particularly of the Eleusinian mysteries, celebrated at Athens, is perfectly agreeable to that of Clemens. §

Our learned and able advocate for the mysteries, to obviate the prejudice which might arise against them from the testimony of the ancient Christian writers, endeavours to account for the ill opinion they had of them, by observing that “ they bore a secret grudge to the mysteries for their injurious treatment of Christianity at its first appearance in the world. The Christians, for their contempt of the national deities, were deemed atheists by the people, and were so branded by the mystagogues, and exposed among the rest in Tartarus, in their solemn shows and representations. This, without doubt, was what sharpened the fathers against the mysteries, and they were not always tender in loading what they did not approve.” || This is by no means a proper

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\* Clem. Alex. Cohort. ad Gentes, p. 13, 14. Edit. Potter.

† Ibid. p. 19, 20.

‡ Præp. Evangel. lib. ii. cap. 3. p. 61. et seq.

§ Advers. Gentes, lib. v. p. 173, et seq. Lugd. Bat. 1651.

|| Div. Leg. vol. I. p. 199. Edit. 4th.

apology for the ancient Christians, if the charge they brought against the mysteries was false and calumnious. But the truth is, the very reason our learned author gives of the sharpness which the ancient Christian writers expressed against the mysteries, is a proof that the design of them was not really such as he represents it to have been. For it appears from it, that the mystagogues and managers of the mysteries did what they could to uphold the common polytheism and idolatry: and this was the true cause of their enmity to Christianity. They represented the Christians as atheists, because they declared against the worship of the publicly adored deities. Whereas if the design of the secret doctrine of the greater mysteries had been to detect the error of the vulgar polytheism, and to teach the initiated that the popular deities were really no gods, the charge might have been retorted upon themselves.

The last thing this celebrated writer has urged, to take off the force of the testimonies of the ancient fathers of the church against the mysteries, and which he calls the strange part of the story, is, that, after all they had said against them, "they should so studiously and formally transfer the terms, phrases, rites, ceremonies, and discipline of these odious mysteries into our holy religion." To which purpose he has a long quotation from Casaubon's 16th Exercitation against the annals of Baronius.\* And he adds, "Sure then it was some more than ordinary veneration the people had for these mysteries that could incline the fathers of the church to so fatal a counsel." It will be allowed that the mysteries were had in great veneration among the Pagans, and that the fathers knew them to be so. And for that reason, if they had any notion that the design of the mysteries was what he represents it to have been, they would undoubtedly have taken advantage of that veneration, for drawing the people off from the worship of the popular divinities, to the adoration of the one true God, the Creator and Governor of the universe. The veneration

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\* Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 200.

the people had for the mysteries affords not the least presumption, that the design of them was to detect and overthrow the popular polytheism, but rather the contrary. The Christians certainly did not consider them in this light: and yet, because of the veneration which was so generally paid them, they often applied to their own use the terms made use of in those mysteries, the better to gain upon the heathens, and to show that Christianity affected that in reality which the Pagan mysteries vainly pretended to.

I shall produce a remarkable passage of this kind from Clement of Alexandria, in the latter end of that very discourse, in which he shows he had the worst opinion imaginable of the mysteries.\* He there speaks of the Christian religion, in allusion to the mysteries of Bacchus, and invites the heathens to quit the one in order to embrace the other. He all along employs the terms which were made use of in those rites and mysteries. He talks of celebrating "the venerable orgia of the word." To the hymns which were sung at the mysteries, he opposes a hymn sung to the great King of the universe. He speaks of a Christian's being initiated, and cries out, "O truly holy mysteries! being initiated I am made holy.—" *ὦ τῶν ἁγίων ὡς ἀληθῶς μυστηρίων! ἅγιος γίνομαι μυῆμενος.* He says, "*Ἱεροφάντει δὲ ὁ κύριος.*—The Lord himself acts the part of an hierophant," or interpreter of the mysteries. And he concludes, "These are the Bacchanalia of my mysteries: come then, and be initiated."

Can any man think that Clement makes this allusion to the mysteries, because he looked upon them to be really holy and useful things? The contrary plainly appears from this very passage, as well as from what he had said before, in the same discourse. But as they were accounted holy, and were had in great veneration among the Pagans, and as the latter Platonists and Pythagoreans represented them as the most perfect means of purifying the soul, he takes occasion to show

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\* Clem. Alex. Cohort. ad Gentes, p. 92. Edit. Potter.

that that venerable sanctity and purity was really to be found in the Christian religion, and its sacred doctrines and rites, which they falsely attributed to their mysteries. Yet I agree with this learned writer in the judicious remark he makes, that the affecting to transfer the terms, phrases, and ceremonies of the mysteries into our holy religion had a bad effect. The symbolizing in this and several other instances with the Pagans, in their customs and ways of expression, from a desire, no doubt, of softening their prejudices against Christianity, contributed very early to vitiate and deprave that religion which, as he observes, a Pagan writer could not but see and acknowledge was "*absoluta et simplex*," as it came out of the hands of its author.\*

It may perhaps be thought that I have insisted too largely upon the nature and design of the Pagan mysteries. But it seemed to me to be necessary for setting the subject I am upon, especially with regard to the civil theology of the Pagans, in a proper light. The learned Mr. Des Voeux several years ago, in his life of Julian, vol. II. p. 287, et seq. offered some judicious observations to show that the mysteries were not intended to overturn the Pagan polytheism. But his design did not lead him to consider this matter so fully as I have done. I shall only add, that, in the remarks that are here made, I have had a special regard to the fourth and last edition of the Divine Legation, in which there are several corrections and improvements made by the right reverend and learned author, which do not appear in the former editions of that celebrated work.

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\* Ammian. Marcell. Hist. lib. xxi. cap. 16. Div. Leg. ubi supra, p. 200.

## CHAP. X.

*The philosophical theology of the ancient Pagans considered. High encomiums bestowed upon the Pagan philosophy. Yet it was of little use for leading the people into a right knowledge of God and religion, and for reclaiming them from their idolatry and polytheism. This shown from several considerations. And, first, if the philosophers had been right in their own notions of religion, they could have but small influence on the people, for want of a proper authority to enforce their instructions.*

HAVING considered the poetical and fabulous theology of the Pagans, which was taught by the mythologists, as also the civil theology which was countenanced and established by the public authority, and shown the deplorable state of religion in the Gentile world, with respect to both these, I shall now proceed to what Varro calls the physical or natural, and which, he says, was that of the philosophers. It is the more necessary to consider this, because of those gentlemen who had denied the necessity or even the expediency of divine revelation, have spoken with the highest admiration of the ancient heathen philosophers. That they held out a sufficient light to mankind to guide them into the right knowledge of religious truth and duty, if they would but have attended to their instructions: that in them we have an evident proof of what human reason can do, when duly exercised and improved: and that the world needed no better direction than what those excellent persons gave, as appears from their admirable writings, many of which are come down to us, and are fitted to convey the noblest notions of religion and the Divinity. And it must be acknowledged that, if we are to take the account which the philosophers themselves give of the excellency of their philosophy, the greatest matters might be expected from it, for the instruction of mankind. The Stoics and others defined philosophy to be “*rerum divinarum humanarumque scientia*—the knowledge of things divine and “human.” Plato calls it the gift, Cicero not only so, but



the invention of the gods.\* This last mentioned excellent author, speaking of philosophy in his first book of laws, saith, that "nothing more excellent, more beautiful, more useful, "and profitable, was ever given by the immortal gods for the "benefit of human life.—*Nihil a diis immortalibus uberius, "nihil florentius, nihil præstabilius hominum vitæ datum "est.*"† Plato, in his *Timæus*, carries it farther : for he says not only that "no greater good ever was given, but ever will "be given by the favour and bounty of the gods to the human "race." Cicero translates that passage of Plato thus : "*quo "bono nullum optabilius, nullum præstantius, neque datum "est immortalium deorum concessu atque munere, neque "dabitur.*"‡

And as they were sensible of the importance and necessity of knowing and worshipping the Deity, so they represented the instructing men in this to be one principal business of philosophy. "It hath instructed us," saith Cicero, "in the "first place, in what relates to the worship of the gods, and "next in justice towards men, which consisteth in the offices "of human society, and hath also formed us to modesty and "true greatness of mind." He adds that "it hath dispelled "darkness from our minds, that we might be enabled to be- "hold all things, things above and things below, the first, "middle, and last things.—*Hæc nos primum ad illorum "deorum cultum, deinde ad jus hominum, quod situm est "in generis humani societate, tum ad modestiam, magnitudi- "nemque animi erudit : eademque ab animo tanquam ab "oculis caliginem dispulit, ut omnia supera, infera, prima, "ultima, media, videremus.*"§ It is scarce possible to carry the encomium higher. If this be so, philosophy must certainly be sufficient to instruct us in every thing that it is proper for us to know. We need no other nor better guide. To the same purpose Seneca saith that "it is the proper work

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\* *Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. cap. 26. p. 63. Edit. Davis, 4to.*

† *De Leg. lib. i. cap. 22. p. 63. Edit. Davis, 2d.*

‡ *Fragm. de Universo. cap. 14.* § *Tuscul. Disput. ubi supra, p. 64.*

“ of philosophy to find out the truth, both in divine and human things.—Hujus opus unum est in divinis humanisque “ verum invenire.”\* Epictetus represents it as essential to true piety, to form right opinions concerning the gods, and intimates that this is what philosophy teaches us.† Plutarch in his tract, *De Liberis Educand.* after having observed that there is one only art capable of curing the diseases of the mind, and that this is philosophy, particularly mentions it as one of its principal advantages, that, by the assistance of philosophy, we know how to demean ourselves towards the gods, our parents, &c. that is, as he explains it, to worship the gods, to honour our parents, &c.

Let us therefore particularly enquire, whether and how far the philosophers, with all the aids of human learning and strength of genius, were of use to instruct mankind in the right knowledge of God and religion.

And I think, allowing all that can be reasonably said in their favour, it must be acknowledged that in fact they were of little service for recovering the nations from the gross superstitions and idolatries into which they were fallen, to the true knowledge and worship of the Deity. And several considerations may be offered to show that this was a work which, as things were circumstanced, they were not fitted to accomplish.

And first, it is to be observed that, if we should suppose the philosophers to have been never so right in their own notions, they had little influence on the people, for want of a proper authority to enforce their instructions. The people for the most part thought themselves very little concerned in what the philosophers taught in their schools. They looked upon their philosophical disquisitions and disputations to be the exercises of wit and genius, done rather for an ostentation of their parts and learning, than for any emolument to

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\* Sen. Epist. 90.

† Epictet. Enchir. cap. 31. Edit. Upton, compared with Dissert. lib. II. cap. 14. sect. 2.

the public. But especially they paid little attention to them, in religious matters relating to the gods and their worship. The philosophers were not the authorized ministers of religion. The people were governed by the religion of the state, which was administered by the priests, to which the philosophers themselves conformed, and urged the people to conform. It has been already observed, from Varro, that as to what related to the gods, the people were more inclined to follow the poets than the philosophers. Nor were the great men of the state, many of whom were also priests, willing that the people should be under the direction of the philosophers, in matters of religion. That eminent statesman and pontiff, Scævola, before mentioned, speaking of the philosophic theology, or doctrine of the gods, saith "that it was not proper for cities, because it had some things in it needless and superfluous, and some things which it may be hurtful to the people to know.—Secundum genus (quod est traditum a philosophis) non congruit civitatibus, quod habeat aliqua supervacua, aliqua etiam quæ obsit populo nosse."\* And Varro, speaking of what the philosophers disputed concerning the gods, was for confining their disputes and speculations concerning the gods within the walls of the schools, and not producing them to the public, as being what the people could not bear. "Quæ facilius inter parietes in scholâ, quàm extra in foro ferre possunt aures." And indeed the disputes among the philosophers relating to the gods, which he there mentions, were of such a kind, that the publishing them among the people would rather have confounded than instructed them.† Besides there was such a disagreement among them in their opinions, that, if the people had been for governing themselves absolutely by their authority, they would

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\* Apud August. De Civ. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 27. p. 84.

† Apud Augustin. De Civit. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 5. p. 116. The disputes he there refers to are thus expressed by him: "Dii quæ sint, ubi, quod genus, quale, quonam tempore, an ab æterno fuerint, an ex igne sint, ut Heraclitus, an ex numeris, ut Pythagoras, an ex atomis, ut Epicurus."

have been at a loss whom to follow: of which we need no better proof than the account Cicero gives of them, in his celebrated books, *De Naturâ Deorum*. They left them, therefore, for the most part to dispute about these things in their schools, without troubling themselves much about their opinions or arguments. And as for the politicians and civil magistrates, Cotta, no doubt, spoke their sense when he declared that, “in matters of religion, he chose to follow Ti. Coruncanius, P. Scipio, P. Scævola, who were chief pontiffs, not Zeno, or Cleanthes, or Chrysippus: and that he set a higher value upon what C. Lælius, the augur, said, in his noble oration on religion, than upon the doctrines of any of the principal Stoics.—Cum de religione agitur Ti. Coruncanium, P. Scipionem, et P. Scævolam, pontifices maximos, non Zenomen, aut Cleanthem, aut Chrysippum sequor: habeoque C. Lælium augurem, eundemque sapientem, quem potius audiam, dicentem de religione in illâ oratione nobili, quàm quenquam principem Stoicorum.”\*

And as the people gave little attention to the opinions of the philosophers, so the philosophers despised the people, as incapable of receiving and profiting by their instructions. Plato observes that “those who philosophize are necessarily blamed or reproached by the multitude, as also by those who desire to please them.—Τοὺς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἀνάγκη ψέγεσθαι ὑπ’ αὐτῶν.”† And again, that “the generality of men were unfavourably affected towards philosophy.—Χαλεπῶς πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν τοὺς πολλοὺς διακεῖσθαι.”‡ There is a remarkable passage of Cicero, to the same purpose, in which he says that “philosophy is content with a few judges: that it decidedly shuns the multitude, and is by them suspected and

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\* Concerning this oration of Lælius, and the occasion of it, which was wholly designed for defending the public ancient religion of the Romans, see Davis notes on this passage. *De Nat. Deor.* lib. iii. cap. 2. p. 261.

† Plato *Repub.* lib. vi. *Oper.* p. 473. B. *Ficin.* Lugd. 1590.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 475. F.

“ disliked : so that if any man should set himself to vilify all  
 “ philosophy, he might do it with the approbation and ap-  
 “ plause of the people.—*Est philosophia paucis contenta*  
 “ *judicibus, multitudinem consultò fugiens, eique ipsi suepec-*  
 “ *ta et invisa: ut vel siquis universam velit vituperare, secun-*  
 “ *do id populo facere possit.*”\*

It appears then that the people had little to do with the philosophers, or the philosophers with the people. Whilst they could not pretend to any divine authority to enforce their dictates, their most plausible speculations had little weight. Whereas if they had come in the name and by the authority of God himself, and had been able to produce proper credentials of their divine mission, this would have engaged and commanded the attention of the people, in a quite different manner than their philosophical reasonings, to which other arguments and reasonings were opposed by philosophers of great name. What Lactantius saith of the precepts of the philosophers, may be equally applied to their doctrines. After having observed that the philosophers have many things like to what we are taught in Scripture, and frequently come near the truth, he adds that “ these their precepts have no weight,  
 “ because they are human, and need a greater authority, even  
 “ a divine one. No man therefore believes them, because he  
 “ that hears them looks upon him that gives those precepts  
 “ to be a man as well as himself.—*Nihil ponderis habent ista*  
 “ *præcepta, quia sunt humana, et auctoritate majori, id est,*  
 “ *divinâ illa carent. Nemo igitur credit, quia tam se homi-*  
 “ *nem putat esse qui audit, quàm est ille qui præcipit.*”†  
 The philosophers themselves were sensible of this : and, therefore, as they represent their philosophy to be the gift and invention of the gods, so sometimes they express themselves as if they had a mind to be looked upon as inspired persons. Plato, speaking of those whose minds are possessed with an

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\* *Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. cap. 1. p. 126. Edit. Davia. 4to. et ibid. lib. v. cap. 2. p. 344.*

† *Lact. Divin. Instit. lib. iii. cap. 27. p. 330. Edit. var. Lugd. Bat.*

unfeigned love of philosophy, represents this as proceeding from a kind of divine inspiration. “Ἐκ τίνος θεῆς ἐπιπνοίας.”\* And he declares, concerning his own discourses, that they seemed to him to be delivered “not without a kind of inspiration from the gods.—οὐκ ἄνευ τίνος ἐπιπνοίας θεῶν.”† He frequently declares that all wisdom comes from God, and has many passages which tend to show the necessity of a divine instruction. Celsus is for sending men to the poets, wise men, and philosophers, as inspired by a divine afflatus: and particularly he mentions Orpheus as a man confessedly or without doubt ὁμολογουμένως, inspired by a holy spirit;‡ though, as Origen observes, Orpheus wrote more impious fables concerning the gods than Homer himself. The latter Platonists and Pythagoreans, after Christianity appeared, pretended to frequent impulses, revelations, inspirations, and divine communications, which proceeded from a conviction that philosophy, as it signifies true wisdom, or the knowledge of divine things, ought to proceed from God, in order to its having a proper authority on the minds of men: but as they were not able to produce solid proofs of their divine mission, their philosophy and pretences fell together: whilst the Christian religion, which in reality had its original from heaven, though destitute of all worldly advantages, yet being attended with the most convincing evidences of a divine authority, effected that which philosophy could never have accomplished, in subverting that system of Pagan polytheism and idolatry, which had the prescription of many ages to plead, and which seemed so firmly established, that no merely human wisdom or power was able to overturn it.

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\* Plato Repub. lib. vi. Oper. p. 475. E. Edit. Lugd.

† Ibid. p. 636. G.

‡ Origen. cont. Cels. lib. vii. p. 359. et ibid. p. 367.

## CHAP. XI.

*The affected obscurity of the Pagan philosophers another cause which rendered them unfit to instruct the people in religion. Instead of clearly explaining their sentiments on the most important subjects, they carefully concealed them from the vulgar. To which it may be added, that some of them used their utmost efforts to destroy all certainty and evidence, and to unsettle men's minds as to the belief of the fundamental principles of all religion: and even the best and greatest of them acknowledged the darkness and uncertainty they were under, especially in divine matters.*

ANOTHER observation which is proper to be made concerning the ancient philosophers is, that some of the most eminent amongst them, in discoursing of the principles of their philosophy, especially when they treated of religion and divine things, involved their sentiments in great obscurity, and were so far from intending them for general use, that they carefully concealed them from the people.

The Egyptians, whose wisdom was so much admired and celebrated among the ancients, were particularly remarkable for this. They had, besides their popular theology, another which they kept secret, and only communicated to a few select persons, whom they thought fit to be intrusted with it. Clement of Alexandria, who himself lived in Egypt, observes that “the Egyptians did not expose their religious mysteries promiscuously to all; nor did they communicate the knowledge of divine things to the people, but to those only who were to succeed to the kingdom, and to those of the priests whom they judged best qualified for it by their birth and extraction, by their education and their learning.”\* Plutarch says the same thing in his treatise, *De Isid. et Osir.*† where he also observes that they were wont to place sphynxes before their temples, to signify that their theology had an enigmatical meaning in it. And Origen informs us that not only the

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\* Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. v. p. 670. Edit. Potter.

† Plut. Oper. tom. II. p. 354.

Egyptians, but the Persians, Syrians, Indians, and other nations, had a secret theology distinct from the common, and known only to their wise men; whilst the "*ἡμίρτοι*—the vulgar "and unlearned," hearing only certain fables which they knew not the meaning of, looked no further than the outward symbols.\* As to the Greeks, Orpheus and the eldest poets and philosophers, who derived much of their learning and philosophy from Egypt, did also, like the Egyptians, wrap up their doctrines of divine things in fables; whereby they came in time to be lost, or greatly depraved. Pythagoras to fables substituted numbers and obscure symbols, which were explained only to his disciples, and not to them till after a tedious preparation. Nor was the meaning of them long preserved and understood even among those of his own sect. A remarkable instance of which we have in the different explications given by them of the Tetractys, on which they, after Pythagoras, laid so great a stress. Concerning which see Burnet's *Archæolog.* lib. i. cap. 11. where he gives a long catalogue of ancients and moderns, who were divided about the meaning of the Tetractys. And certain it is, that a great obscurity reigned all along in the Pythagoric school. Socrates was the first among the philosophers, and almost the only one, who used a plain and familiar manner of instruction. But then he treated chiefly of things of a moral and civil nature, and meddled very little with the speculations of the philosophers about the gods, and

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\* Orig. cont. Cels. lib. i. p. 11. We are told, also, that the ancient Chinese philosophers, who were the founders of the sect of the learned, had their symbols and hieroglyphics; and that the books which contain the speculative part of the Chinese doctrine, are full of those symbols, and treat of the mysteries, and efficient causes of numbers. It is also observed, concerning the three principal sects of China, that they have two several sorts of doctrines; one private, which they look upon as true, and is only understood by the learned, and professed by them under the veil of symbols and figures; the other vulgar and popular, which, by their learned men, is looked upon as false, in the superficial sound of the words. This they make use of for government, and in their civil worship, for inclining the people to good, and deterring them from evil. See F. Longobardi's *Treatise in Navarette's Account of the Empire of China*, in Churchill's *Collection of Travels*, &c. vol. I. p. 174.



the nature of things; but declined and discouraged such enquiries. Xenophon, in an epistle to Æschines, cited by Eusebius, blames those who, quitting the plain and simple philosophy of Socrates, were in love with Egypt, and the *μεγαλώδης σοφία*, the *portentous wisdom* of Pythagoras. This, as Eusebius observes, was intended against Plato.\* And indeed the greatest admirers of that famous philosopher must own that he is often obscure, and treats his subject, especially when he is discoursing on divine things, in a manner no way adapted to the capacity of the people. Hence the ridicule cast upon him by the comic poet Amphys, mentioned by Laërtius. “The good “whatever it is that you expect to get from this, I understand “less than Plato’s good.”† And the reason is given by Alcinous, in his account of Plato’s philosophy, chap. 27. “That “which is worthy of honour, such as the supreme Good, he “[Plato] conceived not easy to be found, and if found “not safe to be declared.”‡ Or, as Plato himself expresses it, “τὸν μὲν ἐν ποιητῇ καὶ πατέρᾳ τῷδε τῷ πάντος εὐρεῖν τὸ ἔργον, καὶ “εὐρόντα εἰς πάντας ἀδυνατὸν λέγειν. §—It is a difficult matter to find “out the Maker and Parent of the universe, and when you “have found him to declare him to all is impossible.” Or, as Cicero gives the sense, “to declare him to the vulgar is “unlawful.—Indicare in vulgus nefas.” Ficinus, in his argument on Plato’s seventh book of laws, taking notice of Plato’s saying that the things he had said hitherto seemed to him to be like poetry, and not without a kind of inspiration from the gods, observes upon it, that “by this he signifies that all his “writings to that time, that is, to his old age, were in some “sort divinely inspired, and disposed in a poetical figurative “manner, and for the most part to be explained allegorically. “And, therefore, in his epistles, he says that his true meaning “was comprehended by none, or by a very few, and that with

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\* Præpar. Evangel. lib. xiv. cap. 12. p. 745.

† Diog. Laërt. lib. iii. segm. 27.

‡ See Stanley’s History of Philosophy, p. 192.

§ Plat. Oper. p. 526. F. Edit. Lugd.

"difficulty, by a kind of prophetic sagacity.—In his significat  
 "omnia ejus scripta in eam usque diem, id est senium, esse  
 "quodammodo divinitus inspirata, atque poeticâ figurâ dis-  
 "posita, ut sint allegoricè plurimùm exponenda. Ob id, in  
 "epistolis ait mentem suam vel a nullo, vel a quàm paucissimis,  
 "et vix tandem ex quâdam vaticinii sagacitate posse compre-  
 "hendi." \* Ficinus probably had an eye to a passage in Pla-  
 to's epistle to Dion's friends, in which he says that none of  
 those who thought they knew the things which were the sub-  
 jects of his meditations, rightly understood them: nor had he  
 ever written, nor would write of them, so as to explain them  
 clearly to others: and that, if it had seemed to him proper to  
 explain them, in word or writing, to the vulgar, he could not  
 have done a more excellent thing in life, than to produce to  
 the public what was useful to mankind, and to bring nature  
 into a clear and open light: but that he thought the attempt-  
 ing to publish these things would not be of use to men, a very  
 few excepted, who are able of themselves to find out and im-  
 prove the hints which are given them. † These things, which  
 he did not think fit to explain, related probably to his sublime  
 speculations concerning the supreme God, the chiefest Good.  
 And I think, from the account Plato himself gives of his own  
 writings, we cannot well be sure at this distance that we hit  
 upon his true meaning, and therefore ought not to lay any  
 great stress upon what we imagine to be his notions. Origen,  
 who had a great esteem for Plato, observes that very few pro-  
 fited by his beautiful and accurate discourses, and that his  
 works were only in the hands of the learned.‡ The latter  
 Platonists and Pythagoreans, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Proclus,  
 and others, affect a mystical theology: and though there are  
 excellent things in their writings, they are no way accommo-  
 dated to the use of the people. Now, whatever was the cause  
 of this obscurity in some of the most eminent Pagan philoso-

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\* Plato. Oper. p. 836, 837.

† Ibid. p. 719. A. B.

‡ Orig. cont. Celsum, lib. vi. in initio, p. 275.

phers, whether it was owing to their not having had just and clear ideas themselves of these matters, or to a fear of their being accounted enemies to the popular religion, or to their being of opinion that the people were not fitted to receive these discoveries, but would make a wrong use of them; to which soever of these causes this obscurity was owing (and it is not improbable that all these causes contributed to it) it shows they were not well qualified to lead the people into the right knowledge of religion, nor could their instructions be of general use. But it is the great advantage and glory of the Christian revelation, that, as it was designed to promote the salvation of all, so it was published clearly and openly to the people, that it might be of universal benefit, for instructing men in the right knowledge of God and religion. Some learned and ingenious persons have indeed endeavoured to apologize for Plato and the other philosophers, who kept their doctrines secret from the people, by observing that the Divine Author of our religion made the same distinction among his hearers, and spoke darkly to the people in parables,\* what he afterwards explained fully to his disciples, Mark iv. 34. But it should be considered, that the parables there referred to, particularly relate to the different reception his gospel would meet with, among those to whom it should be published, the progress it would make in the world, and other things of that kind, which it was not as yet proper openly to declare. He therefore explained them privately to his disciples, with an intention, however, that they should publish them in the fittest season. And accordingly, at that very time, he said to his disciples that their "candle was not to be put under a bushel, but in a candlestick," that it might give light to all. "For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested: neither was any thing secret, but that it should come abroad," Mark iv. 21, 22. Or, as he elsewhere expresseth it, "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be

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\* See Geddes's *Essay on the Composition of the Ancients*, p. 176, 177.

"known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light, "and what ye hear in the ear, that speak ye upon the house "tops," Matt. x. 26, 27. Those very parables, with his exposition of them, were afterwards published to the world. And he commissioned his apostles to "go into all the world," and "preach the gospel to every creature;" or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "to disciple all nations, teaching them to "observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them."\* What St. Paul saith of himself was true of all the apostles, when he tells those among whom he preached, that he "had "not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God."† Accordingly the people were every where openly instructed in the knowledge of the only true God, his glorious attributes and perfections, the worship due to him, the vanity of polytheism and idolatry, the creation of the world, the methods of our redemption by Jesus Christ, the gracious terms of the new covenant, and its exceeding great and precious promises, the extent of the duty required of us, in the divine law, the resurrection of the dead, a future judgment, and the rewards and punishments of the world to come. Hence it was that, as is frequently observed by the ancient Christian writers, many, even of the common Christians, who were strangers to learning and philosophy, knew more of these things, points of the highest importance to mankind, than the wise men and philosophers among the Pagans.

This leads me to a third consideration, which shows that the philosophers were not well fitted to instruct mankind in the right knowledge of God and religion: and that is, the darkness and uncertainty they were under, in matters of the greatest consequence: and that it appears from their own acknowledgments, that they had nothing to offer, especially in relation to divine things, which could be safely depended upon.

It is well known that some of the most subtle of the an-

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\* Mark xvi. 15. Matt. xxviii. 20.  
Vol. I.

† Acts xx. 27.

cient philosophers absolutely denied all certainty and evidence. In consequence of this they set themselves, with all the force of their wit and reason, to weaken and shake the main principles of all religion, and even to invalidate the proofs of the existence of God: though, for their own safety, they professed a great regard for the public religion, and the legal and popular deities. Such were the several kinds of Sceptics, of whom the Pyrrhonians were the most eminent. And not very different from these were those of the New Academy, which was formed by Arcesilas, further improved by Carneades, and supported with great learning and eloquence by Cicero. Though the Academics held that some things were more probable than others, in which they differed from the Pyrrhonians, who held that all things are alike doubtful and indifferent, yet they denied that there is any thing which can be certainly known or understood, and that therefore we ought not to affirm any thing, but always to withhold our assent.\* Epictetus justly exposes the philosophy and manner of

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\* A celebrated author, in his life of Cicero, gives it as his opinion, that there was a real difference between the New Academy and the Sceptics. That the latter maintained a perfect neutrality towards all opinions as equally uncertain: but the Academics admitted a probable in things, though they denied that a certainty was to be attained to. He cites a passage from Cicero *De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 5.* where he says "there are many things probable, which, though not perfectly comprehended, yet, on account of their specious appearance are sufficient to govern the life of a wise man.—*Multa esse probabilia quæ quanquàm non perciperetur, tamen quia visum haberent quendam insignem et inlustrem, his sapientis vita regetur.*" And again, in the fourth book of his *Academic Questions*, cap. 3. he saith, "we have many probabilities which we readily embrace, but dare not affirm.—*Nos probabilia multa habemus, quæ sequi facillè, affirmare vix possumus.*" Middleton's *Life of Cicero*, vol. II. p. 599, 600. *Dubl. edit.* Yet, in the words immediately preceding the former of these passages, Cicero gives it as the opinion of the Academics, that "all truths have some falsehoods adjoined to them, so very like, that there is no certain mark to determine our judgment or assent.—*Omnibus veris falsa quædam adjuncta esse, tantâ similitudine, ut in iis nulla insit certa judicandi et adsentienti nota:*" which seems to me to come in effect to the sceptical principle. The present learned Bishop of Gloucester has offered several reasons to show, that the Middle and New Academy were in reality the same, and that they both were as real Sceptics, as that sect which was so

reasoning of the Sceptics and Academics, as not only absurd and ridiculous, but of pernicious consequence to religion and good manners; and represents them as the most incorrigible of all men, and the most unfit to be reasoned with.\*

But it may not be improper to observe, on this occasion, that, besides the professed Sceptics and the Academics, there were many others of the philosophers who made loud complaints of the uncertainty of human knowledge. Seneca, in his 88th epistle, produces a long catalogue of the ancients, who said that nothing was to be known. And the learned Gataker has collected many testimonies to this purpose, in his Annotations on Marcus Antoninus, p. 198, et seq. It was a celebrated saying of Socrates, "that he knew this only, that he knew nothing." Cicero observes, at the latter end of his first book of Academic Questions, that the obscurity of things had brought Socrates to a confession of his ignorance, as also Democritus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and almost all the ancients: "*omnes pænè veteres.*"† And, in his second book of Academic Questions, he saith that "all knowledge is obstructed and encumbered with many difficulties, and that there is that obscurity in the things themselves, and that weakness in our own judgments, that it was not without reason that the most learned men, and those of the greatest antiquity, despaired of being able to find out that which they desired to know.—*Omnis cognitio multis est obstructa difficultatibus, eaque in est, et in ipsis rebus obscuritas, et in judiciis nostris infirmitas, ut non sine causâ, et doctissimi et antiquissimi invenire se posse quod cuperent, diffisi sint.*"‡

Especially there were many of them that acknowledged

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denominated. For though they pretended their end was to find the probable, they were for keeping the mind in an eternal suspense, and continued going on, disputing against every thing, without ever finding the probable to determine their judgments. See Div. Leg. of Moses, &c. vol. II. p. 117, 118. 4th edit.

\* Epict. Dissert. lib. i. cap. 5. et lib. ii. cap. 20. sect. 6.

† Academ. Quest. lib. i. cap. 13.

‡ Academ. Quest. lib. iv. cap. 3.

their ignorance in divine matters. Melissus, the Samian, a disciple of Parmenides, who was much honoured and admired by his countrymen, said, as Laërtius informs us, that "we ought not to assert any thing concerning the gods; for we have no knowledge of them."\* Plato himself has many things concerning the imperfection and uncertainty of human knowledge in divine matters. In his *Epinomis*, speaking of the things relating to religion and the worship of the gods, he saith, "that it is not possible for mortal nature to know any thing certain concerning such things as these,—*ὅσα μὲν ἴσθαι δύνασθαι εἰδέναι τὸ θεῶν φύσει τῶν τοιούτων πέρι.*"† To the same purpose, in his fourth *Republic*, he saith, "these are things we do not know:" and therefore he advises to have recourse to the patron god, as the proper instructor and guide.‡ In his famous allegory of the philosophic cave, he supposes that at present men are as it were bound down with fetters in a subterraneous cave, with their backs to the light, and unable to turn their heads towards it: and that, till these fetters are loosed and removed, they are hindered from discerning the truth and substance of things, and only see the phantoms and shadows of them, which they conceive to be the things themselves: but cannot raise their contemplations to the *τὸ ὄν* and *τὸ ἀγαθόν*, that which really is, or that which is good itself.§

Aristotle disapproved and argued strongly against those who pretended that we cannot know or be certain of any thing. He said, he could not think that what they called philosophy ought to have that name given it, since it took away the very principles of philosophising.|| Yet he makes this remarkable acknowledgment, that, "as the eyes of bats are to the brightness of the day-light, so also is the understanding of our souls towards those things which are by

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\* Laërt. lib. ix. segm. 24. † Plato. Oper. p. 702. E. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

‡ Ibid. p. 448. B. C.

§ See the 7th book of his *Republic*, in the beginning.

|| Arist. de Philos. lib. viii. ap. Euseb. Præp. Evang. lib. xiv. cap. 18. p. 763.

nature the most manifest of all.—ὥσπερ γὰρ καὶ τὰ τῶν νυκτερίδων ἕμματα πρὸς τὸ φέγγος ἔχει τὸ κατ' ἡμέραν, ὅτως καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας ψυχῆς ὁ νόος πρὸς τὰ τῇ φύσει φανερώτατα.\*

The Stoics were, of all the philosophers, those who made the highest pretensions to certainty and evidence, and were the constant opposers of the Academics. They would not allow any doubtfulness of opinion in their wise man, but that he had a clear and certain comprehension of things: yet they could not help sometimes talking in a different strain. Marcus Antoninus, though a strict Stoic, observes that “the natures of things are so covered up from us, that, to many philosophers, and those no mean ones, all things seem uncertain and incomprehensible.” He adds that “the Stoics themselves own it to be very difficult to comprehend any thing certainly. All our judgments are fallible.” So it is in the Glasgow translation of Antoninus. In the original it runs thus, “πᾶσα ἡ ἡμετέρα συγκατάθεσις μετέπρωτη;” which Gataker renders, “omnis assensus noster est labilis et mutabilis.—“Every assent of ours is liable to mistake and change.”† Diodorus Siculus charges the Græek philosophy, in general, as leading men into perpetual doubts. He observes that they were continually innovating in the most considerable doctrines, and, by perpetually contradicting one another, made their disciples dubious; so that their minds, as long as they lived, were in suspense, neither could they firmly believe any thing.‡ It may therefore be affirmed that philosophy, especially as it was managed among the Greeks, tended rather to unsettle men's notions in religion, and to unhinge some of the main principles conveyed by ancient tradition, than to set the people right, and rectify their errors, in the most important points of religious faith and practice. This observation shows how little the philosophers were to be depended upon: since

\* Arist. Metaphys. lib. ii. cap. 1.

† Marc. Anton. lib. v. s. 10.

‡ Stanley's Hist. Philos. p. 1034. Edit. 2d.



some of the greatest and best of them confessed, on several occasions, that they had not any thing certain to offer for the instruction of mankind, especially in things relating to religion and the Deity. But since at other times they highly extolled philosophy, as the best guide to lead men into the knowledge of things human and divine, it will be proper distinctly to examine the truth and justice of their pretensions.

## CHAP. XII.

*The fourth general consideration. The philosophers unfit to instruct the people in religion, because they themselves were, for the most part, very wrong in their own notions of the Divinity. They were the great corrupters of the ancient tradition relating to the one true God, and the creation of the world. Many of those who professed to search into the origin of the world, and the formation of things, endeavoured to account for it, without the interposition of a Deity. The opinions of those philosophers who were of a nobler kind considered. It is shown that they were chargeable with great defects, and no way proper to reclaim the nations from their idolatry and polytheism.*

THE considerations which have been already offered, tend to show how little was to be expected from the philosophers, or instructing the people in a right knowledge of God and religion. But this will still more convincingly appear, if we consider what wrong notions they themselves entertained of the Deity, and the confusion and absurdity of their opinions, even with respect to this most important article of all religion. Justin Martyr informs us that, when the Pagans were pressed with the fables of the poets concerning the gods, they were wont to allege their wise men and philosophers, and had recourse to them as a strong wall or bulwark; though he observes that the opinions of the philosophers were more ridiculous than even the theology of the poets. And indeed there were many of them to whom this censure might justly be applied.

Cicero, than whom no man was better acquainted with the tenets of the ancient philosophers, or an abler judge of them, and who was himself, as appears from the passages above produced from him, a great admirer of philosophy, hath written a celebrated treatise concerning the nature of the gods. He begins with observing the great importance of the question, and that it was necessary to the right ordering of religion, “ad moderandam religionem necessaria;” and then immediately takes notice of the prodigious diversity of sentiments among

the most learned philosophers on this subject, which, he says, were so many and various, that it was no easy matter to enumerate them. And the account he gives of them is such as we, who have had the advantage of clearer discoveries of the Deity by the light of divine revelation, cannot read without concern and astonishment. Nor can any thing, in my opinion, exhibit a more melancholy proof of the weakness of human reason, when left to itself, and trusting to its own force, in matters of religion. He gives a long list of the most celebrated names in the Pagan world, especially among the Greek philosophers, men who were most admired for the depth of their learning, or for the fineness of their genius.\* I shall not enter into a detail of their sentiments, for which I refer to the book itself, which is generally known. He does not propose to speak of those who said there were no gods, as Diagoras Melius and Theodorus Cyrenaicus; or who doubted whether there were any, as Protagoras. All those whom he mentions professed to acknowledge a god or gods of one kind or another; but as to the nature of the deity or deities, there was a strange confusion and diversity in their notions. And almost all of them were such as every rational deist in our days, who declares himself an admirer of natural religion, will readily pronounce to be absurd and contrary to reason.†

The ancient philosophers may be distributed into two principal ranks or classes. The one is, of those who excluded a divine mind or understanding from any concern in the formation of the universe. The other is, of those who attributed the frame and order of things to a most wise, powerful, and benign Cause and Author.

Among the former may be reckoned most of those who first applied themselves to the study of philosophy in Greece, and to search into the nature of things. Aristotle expressly tells

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\* He mentions Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Alcmaeon Crotoniates, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Diogenes Apolloniata, Antisthenes, Xenocrates, Heraclides Ponticus, Strato, Plato, Xenophon, Speusippus, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Zeno, Chrysippus.

us, that most of those who first philosophized “ τῶν πρώτων φιλοσοφῆσαντων οἱ πλαῖῆται—seeing the substance of matter to remain “ always the same, and that it was altered only in its qualities, “ made matter to be the only principle, or the first cause of “ all things that exist.”\* And the same opinion he charges upon those who first theologized, and whom he calls the most ancient of all, who made Ocean and Thetis to be the first authors or fathers of the generation of things.† The tradition, that the world was formed by God out of a chaos, was of the highest antiquity, derived from the first ages, and was probably communicated by original revelation to the first parents of the human race. It is not only preserved in the writings of Moses, but, as was hinted before, had spread generally through the nations. The Pagan philosophers and theologues were among the first that corrupted and perverted this ancient tradition, by endeavouring to account for the origination of all things out of a chaos without any intelligent cause. Eusebius cites some passages out of a book of Plutarch, which he calls his *Stromata*, to show the various opinions of the ancient Greek philosophers, called Physici, or natural philosophers, concerning the origin and composition of the universe. He takes notice particularly of Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Metrodorus Chius, Empedocles, Democritus, Epicurus, Diogenes Apolloniata; and observes, that they who were accounted the most eminent of those whom the Greeks called natural philosophers, in their disquisitions concerning the constitution of things, and the cosmogonia, or generation and production of the world, did not suppose any wise author or architect of the whole; nor did they make the least mention of God in it.‡ The most ancient philosophers were very fond of enquiring into the origin of the universe, and the first causes and principles of things; and trusting to

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\* Arist. *Metaphys.* lib. i. cap. 3. *Oper.* tom. II. p. 842. Edit. Paris, 1629.

† Arist. *Metaphys.* ubi supra, p. 843.

‡ Euseb. *Præpar. Evangel.* lib. i. cap. 8. p. 22, et seq.

the force of their own genius, they attempted, as if they had been so many makers of worlds, to form schemes of their own, concerning the formation of things; and, dropping God out of the account, valued themselves upon showing how the world might be made without him. But, as a just judgment upon them, and to the disgrace of human reason, they run into hypotheses so absurd and extravagant, that we are ready to wonder how they could enter into the head of any man of sense. How rare a thing it had been among the ancient Greek philosophers to introduce an intelligent mind, in accounting for the origin and order of the universe, appears from the great joy Socrates expressed, when he heard that Anaxagoras had wrote a book, in which he declared that an understanding mind is the cause of all things, the author of that beautiful order that is to be observed in them. He speaks of it as a kind of new discovery, which he had not met with in the books of other philosophers; though he complains of his disappointment, when he found that that philosopher did not apply this notion, he expected he would have done, to the accounting for the particular phenomena of nature.

Leucippus, Democritus, and Epicurus, have been particularly taken notice of for their absurd schemes concerning the formation of the world by a fortuitous concourse of atoms. But the schemes of many others of the ancient philosophers were really no less absurd, in endeavouring to account for the origin of things without the interposition and contrivance of an infinite understanding mind. And yet they all of them professed to acknowledge a god or gods;\*for the people would not have endured them, if they had absolutely denied a Deity.

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\* Those of them who made matter the only first principle, made a show of maintaining one first cause, one eternal and necessarily existent principle, which they called God. But then they subdivided this into particular deities. Thus Anaximander and Anaximenes, who held an infinite matter to be the principle from which all things flow, and into which all things return, held innumerable gods and worlds, successively rising and falling. Cic. De Nat. Deor. lib. i. c. 10. Plut. De Placit. lib. i. c. 3.

Epicurus himself asserted that there are gods, and pretended to argue from the innate ideas of the gods implanted in the minds of all men.\* And here, by the way, we may observe the great ignorance of the Athenians, the most learned and polite people of Greece, in matters of religion. They showed no public marks of resentment against the authors and abettors of schemes which were really atheistical, and which, by excluding God from the creation or government of the world, tended to subvert the foundation of all religion, and yet banished Anaxagoras, and put Socrates to death, both of whom taught that the world was formed by a wise and understanding mind, because they suspected them to have no great regard for the popular deities. And that the atheistical schemes advanced by many of the philosophers had a very bad effect, and made no small progress among the people, appears from what Plato says, in the beginning of his tenth book of laws, where he complains that there were many, especially of the younger sort, who maintained that “the heavens, the animals, plants, and all things, were produced, not by understanding, nor by any god, nor by art or skill, but by nature and fortune—*φύσει καὶ τύχῃ*,” that is, by an unintelligent nature and chance: and that, “these sort of speeches were spread in a manner universally among all men.—*Κατεσπαρμένον οἱ τιαύτοι λόγοι ἐν ταῖς πόσιν, ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, ἀνθρώποις.*”† This was before the days of Epicurus; and it is well known that his numerous sect, which openly avowed that doctrine, made a great progress both among the Greeks and Romans.

Diodorus Siculus, giving an account of the sentiments of the ancients, especially of the ancient Egyptians, concerning the origin of things, takes no notice of the Deity as having any concern in it.‡ Laërtius tells us, from Manetho and Hecataeus, that the Egyptians held matter to be the principle

\* See what Velleius, the Epicurean, says to this purpose, ap. Cic. De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 17.

† Plat. de Leg. lib. x. Oper. p. 666. B. Edit. Lugd.

‡ Diod. Sic. lib. i. p. 6, 7. et Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 7.

of things. And Porphyry in his letter to Anebo, an Egyptian priest, as cited by Eusebius, observes that Chæremon, and others of the learned Egyptians, acknowledged no other gods than the stars, and the sun, whom they affirmed to be the demiurgus or architect of the world, and that they applied the stories of Isis and Osiris, and other sacred fables, to the course of the sun, the motions and aspects of the stars, their risings and settings, to the river Nile, and other natural and inanimate things, and made no mention of any living or incorporeal natures or essences; and that they made even those things which are in the power of our own wills to depend on the motions of the stars, binding all things in the inevitable chains of necessity. Eusebius remarks, upon this occasion, that even in the arcane theology of the Egyptians, no other but the stars of heaven, wandering and fixed, were placed by them in the number of their gods. And that they did not acknowledge any incorporeal maker or architect of the universe, nor attribute the forming or ordering of it to any reason or wisdom which effected it, or to any intelligent natures which do not fall under the senses, but only to the visible sun. And that therefore they made things all depend upon the necessity of fate, and the motions and influences of the stars: which opinion, Eusebius saith, prevailed among them in his time.† Dr. Cudworth indeed sharply blames Eusebius for passing so severe a censure on the Egyptian theology, and for pushing his charge against the heathens, in this and other instances, with too much rigour. But all that the testimonies produced by the learned Doctor prove, is only that this was not the universal doctrine of all the Egyptian wise men. But that many of their learned men and philosophers were of these sentiments, the passage quoted from Porphyry sufficiently shows. And Eusebius seems to assert, as from his own knowledge, that it continued to be a prevailing doctrine among them when he wrote. Nor is Jamblichus, upon whose

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\* Laërt. in Proœm. segm. 10.

† Præpar. Evang. lib. iii. cap. 4. p. 92, 93. et ibid. cap. 13. p. 119. A.

testimony Dr. Cudworth seems chiefly to rely, much to be depended upon, in the account he gives of the Egyptian theology, which, by this learned writer's own acknowledgment, he takes pains in several instances to disguise.

I would observe, by the way, that the account which the learned Chinese give of the origination of things, is no less absurd than that of those ancient Greek and Egyptian philosophers. They say there must of necessity be a first cause or principle of all things: which they call Li and Tai-kie, the reason and ground of all nature. And that this first cause is an infinite being, incorruptible, pure, subtle, without bodily shape, and without beginning or end. If we were to judge merely by these epithets of the first cause, we might be apt to entertain a very favourable opinion of their philosophy. But they also suppose this first cause to be void of life, intelligence, and liberty.\* They are very particular in their enquiries how all things are produced out of this universal substance, and what are the several changes and conversions through which they pass: but they make the production of the universe to be entirely natural and accidental, not the effect of an understanding mind and will. The reader may see a particular account of all this, confirmed from Chinese

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\* Mr. De Voltaire, in his *Histoire Universelle*, as I find him quoted by the Abbé Ganchet, *Lettres Critiques*, tom. IV. lettre 36, praises the literati of China; for that, "leaving the superstitions as a grosser food to the people, the magistrates and men of letters are nourished by a purer substance." What the pure religion of the Chinese literati is, who are so much cried up by many of those that set up for the patrons of natural religion, may be clearly seen in the treatise of F. Longobardi, here referred to. He gives an account of several conversations he had with the most learned Mandarins. That they laughed at the Christian account of a living intelligent Being who created and governeth all things. And particularly he mentions one Li King, an eminent Doctor and Mandarin, who, when the father missionaries asserted that there is one living, immortal, and omnipotent God, who rewards every man according to his actions, positively denied that there was any such God, or a heaven or hell, as things never heard of in his [the learned] sect. The same author declares that he had conversed with great numbers of their learned men and Mandarins, in several parts of China, during the many years he resided there, and found that they all agreed in these notions. See the book above quoted, p. 196, 197, 198.



books of the greatest authority among the learned sect, in F. Longobardi's treatise before referred to, and which is contained in the fifth book of Navarette's account of the empire of China; and Navarette himself affirms, from his own knowledge, that the learned Chinese are so strongly attached to these notions, that nothing can persuade them to the contrary. See Navarette's Account of China, in the first volume of Churchill's Collection of Travels, &c. p. 113, and p. 137, et seq.

It will be easily allowed that the authors and defenders of the schemes of philosophy which have been mentioned, were no way proper to instruct the people in the right knowledge of God and religion. But it may be said there were others of a nobler character. Admirable passages have been produced from their writings still extant, concerning the existence, the perfections, the attributes, and providence of the Deity. They argued from the illustrious characters of wisdom and design, of goodness and benignity, which appear in the frame and constitution of the world, that it did not owe its original to an undesigning chance, or a blind unintelligent nature, but that there is a most wise, and benign, and powerful mind, which formed this universal system, and is the cause of the order and harmony which is visible in it. Far be it from me to deny these philosophers their just praises. They certainly deserve to be honourably distinguished from those who ascribed all to chance or mere unintelligent matter. I look upon some of them to have been instruments in the hands of Providence, for putting a check to the progress of atheism, and for preserving some remains of religion, when, by the delusions of a false and vain philosophy, it was in danger of being extinguished among persons pretending to a knowledge and penetration above the vulgar. Yet, upon the most impartial enquiry, it will appear that the notions of these best of the philosophers, with regard to that great and fundamental article of all religion, the knowledge and worship of the one true God, the creator and governor of the universe, were in

many instances very defective; and mixed with such dangerous errors, as rendered them not very fit to be the guides and instructors of mankind, and to recover the nations from the idolatry and polytheism into which they were fallen.

I shall take notice of the sentiments of some of the most celebrated among them.

Thales is said to have been the first that introduced philosophy into Greece: and concerning his sentiments the learned are not agreed. Aristotle seems to reckon him among those philosophers who made matter the only principle and cause of all things.\* But according to Cicero, Thales held that all things had their origin from water, but that God was the mind which out of water fashioned all things. "Thales Milesius, qui primus de talibus rebus quæsit, aquam dixit esse initium rerum: deum autem eam mentem quæ ex aquâ cuncta fingeret."† In this he is followed by Minucius Felix and Lactantius. But St. Austin, who no doubt was well acquainted with that passage of Cicero, seems to have paid no great regard to it: for having observed that Thales made water to be the principle of things, out of which the world and all things in it had their existence; he positively affirms that this philosopher did not suppose a divine mind to have had any efficiency or superintendency in the formation of the universe. "Nihil huic operi quod mundo considerato tam admirabile aspicimus, ex divinâ mente præpositum fuisse."‡ But if Cicero's account of Thales' opinion be admitted, it shows that he preserved the primitive tradition, that God framed the earth out of a chaos, or mass of fluid matter. Thales might probably have learned it in the eastern parts to which he travelled: and he himself is said to have been of Phœnician extraction. Minucius Felix thinks it was too sublime to be of his own invention, and that it came originally from a divine revelation or tradition.§ Laërtius mentions a saying

\* Arist. *Metaphys.* lib. i. cap. 3. † De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 10.

‡ De Civ. Dei, lib. viii. cap. 2. p. 146. Edit. Bened.

§ Min. Fel. cap. 19. p. 149, 150. Edit. var. Lugd. Bat. 1672.

of Thales, which, if it may be depended upon, seems to confirm what Cicero says of him, viz. "that the world is the fairest or most beautiful of things, for it is the work of God.—"*ποίνευα γὰρ θεοῦ*."\* But Plutarch gives it a little otherwise, and as some think more accurately, thus; that "the world is the most beautiful of things, for whatsoever is orderly and fitly proportioned, is a part of it."† But whatsoever may be said of Thales himself, none of those who followed him in the Ionic school, of which he was the founder, till the time of Anaxagoras, attributed the formation of the world to an intelligent mind.‡

Pythagoras, who was a little posterior to Thales, was a philosopher of great name, and the founder of what is called

\* Laërt. lib. i. segm. 35.

† In Convivio septem Sapientum, Oper. tom. II. p. 153. C.

‡ The learned Dr. Campbell seems not to be well satisfied with the account given of Thales' opinion, in the passage above quoted from Cicero. He thinks it probable that Thales assigned water as the only principle concerned in the formation of the world: and says he knows of no philosopher, that single passage of Cicero excepted, who explains his opinion otherwise. He also observes, that the passage in Cicero is lame and imperfect, and consequently very perplexed and obscure. But in this I cannot agree with that learned author. The words in which Thales' opinion is represented are very clear and express. It is true that the following words, in which Velleius endeavours to refute that opinion, are very perplexed. And it is generally thought that the place is corrupted. Lambinus has proposed one emendation, and Dr. Davies another. This, however, may be gathered from it, that Velleius supposed Thales to have held that mind was some way joined with the water, in order to the production and formation of things. If the meaning be, that Thales held God to be united to the watery mass, as the soul of the world, it is not improbable that this was his opinion. And it is what Plutarch seems to intend when he tells us, that Thales said, "the mind or intelligence of the world is God." De Placit. Phil. lib. i. cap. 7. And this may help us to account for that noted saying of Thales, that "all things are full of gods." For if he held God to be the soul of the world, he might look upon particular souls and intelligent beings, as Pythagoras and the Stoics did afterwards, to be portions of the universal soul; and upon particular parts of the universe, as animated with this universal soul, to be gods. And thus was a foundation laid for polytheism, and a multiplicity of deities. Agreeable to this is the account Stobæus gives us of Thales' sentiments, that he held that "the intelligence or mind of the world is God; and that the world is animated and full of demons." Stob. Eclog. Phys.—lib. i. cap. 1. Edit. Plantin. See also, to the same purpose, Laërt. lib. i. segm. 27—

the Italic school. He has been reckoned among the asserters of one God, and an incorporeal mind. Lactantius says of him, "Pythagorus unum Deum confitetur dicens incorporalem esse mentem." But he affected so great an obscurity, that, if he had been never so right in his sentiments concerning God and divine things, he could have been of little use to the people. Nor indeed was he to be depended upon as a safe guide, if he had expressed himself clearly and intelligibly. In a passage quoted by Clemens Alex. he asserts God to be the soul of the world, and the *χρᾶσις τῶν ὅλων*, the mixture or temperament of the whole.\* It is generally agreed that he held God to be a mind universally diffused, and pervading all nature. But this mind, though he calls it incorporeal, does not seem to be a pure spirit, in the strictest and properest sense. For he supposed the divine substance to be a fine and subtile æther, which expandeth itself through the universe, and is the cause of all the order that is in it, and the fountain of life to all beings. He maintained, according to Laërtius, that the sun, moon, and other stars, are full of this æthereal substance, or heavenly vital heat (ardor cælestis, as Cicero calls it), and are therefore gods:† that the soul is "ἀπόσπασμα αἰθέρος—a small part taken from the celestial æther:" and thence he argued that the soul is immortal, because that out of which it is discerped is immortal. "Ἀθάνατον εἶναι αὐτὴν [ψυχὴν] ἐπειδήπερ καὶ τὸ ἀπ' οὗ ἀπέσπασται ἀθάνατον ἐστὶ."‡ Cicero represents it as an acknowledged thing, that "Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans never made any doubt that our souls are taken out of the universal divine mind or soul.—Pythagoram Pythagoreosque nunquam dubitâsse quin ex universâ mente divina delibatos animos haberemus."§ And he elsewhere introduces Velleius arguing that, at that rate, "God himself is discerped and torn, when human souls are plucked off from his substance: and when any of them is miserable (which frequently happens),

\* Clem. Alex. Cohort. ad Gentes, p. 62. Edit. Potter.

† Laërt. lib. viii. segm. 27.

‡ Ibid. segm. 28.

§ Cato Major sive De Senect. cap. 21.

"a part of God is miserable; which cannot be." And he asks, "How should the human mind be ignorant of any thing, if it were God?" "Pythagoras, qui censuit animum esse per naturam rerum omnem intentum et commeantem, ex quo animi nostri carperentur, non vidit distractione humanorum animorum discerpi et dilacerari Deum, et cum miseri animi essent (quod plerisque contingerit) tum Dei partem esse miseram; quod fieri non potest. Cur autem quicquam ignoreret animus hominis, si esset Deus?"\* Pythagoras' scheme plainly led to polytheism, or a plurality of gods: and he himself was a promoter of it. Jamblichus says, Pythagoras was instructed concerning the worship of the gods, partly from the Egyptians, partly from the Eleusinian and other mysteries;† which, by the way, supposes that the worship of a multiplicity of deities, and the ceremonies relating to them, were taught in the mysteries.‡

The next I shall mention is Anaxagoras, concerning whom Cicero observes that he was the first who asserted that "the regular order and motion of all things was planned out and accomplished by the force and reason of an infinite mind.—Anaxagoras primus omnium rerum descriptionem et motum mensis infinitæ vi ac ratione designari ac confici voluit."§ This seems to contradict what Cicero had said of Thales a little before. For if it had been the doctrine of Thales, as he represents it, that a divine mind was concerned in the formation of all things, how could it be said that Anaxagoras, who lived many years after Thales, was the first that taught this? It must therefore be allowed, to make Cicero consistent with himself, that he supposed some difference between the opinion of Thales and that of Anaxagoras, concerning this matter. The way that Dr. Davies takes to account for it, in his note on

\* De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 11. † Jambl. Vit. Pythag. sect. 151, 152.

‡ The learned Dr. Campbell has insisted largely on Pythagoras and his sentiments, and will by no means allow that he had a just notion of God the Creator of the universe. Necess. of Revel. from p. 236 to p. 264.

§ De Nat. 1. Deor. i. cap. 11.

this passage, is, that Thales supposed God to be the soul of the world mixed and united with matter (and this I have shown was probably his opinion); whereas Anaxagoras held him to be a pure mind, not united to matter, but free from all corporeal mixture. And indeed it appears, from what Cicero makes Velleius say, when he endeavours to confute him, that he supposed Anaxagoras to hold that God was a simple mind, separate from matter, or any corporeal concretion, and without any thing joined to it, or mixed with it. This Velleius represents as absolutely unintelligible; it being a thing which the Epicureans, such as Velleius was, had no notion of. “*Aperta simplexque mens, nullâ re adjunctâ, quâ sentire possit, fugere intelligentiæ nostræ vim et notionem videtur.*” And Aristotle tells us that Anaxagoras supposed this mind to be. “the only being that is simple, and unmixed, and pure.—*Μόνον τῶν ὄντων ἀπλὴν καὶ ἀμυγῇ καὶ καθαρόν.*” \* Laërtius informs us that Anaxagoras asserted “*νῦν μὲν ἀρχὴν κινήσεως*—that mind is the beginning or principle of motion.” And Plutarch gives his opinion thus, that he said that “bodies did exist from the beginning, but the mind or intellect of God reduced them into a comely order, and effected the origination of all things, or of the universe—*τῶν ὅλων.*” † This was accounted so wonderful a discovery, that he had the name *Nῦς*, *Mind* or *Intellect*, given him on the account of it. And yet it does not appear that, in this noblest part of his philosophy, he had any among the philosophers to follow him, except Socrates and his disciples. Nor did he himself make a right use and application of this excellent principle, or direct others to do so, in order to the explaining the particular phenomena of nature, but ascribed them merely to mechanical and material causes; for which he is justly censured by Socrates. Aristotle has the same observation. ‡ He took no notice of a divine agency in the formation of animals; but endeavoured to account for it

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\* *De Anima*, lib. i. cap. 2.

† *De Placit. Philos.* lib. i. cap. 7. *Oper. tom. II. p. 881. A. Edit. Francof.*

‡ *Arist. Metaphys.* lib. i. cap. 4.

in a manner not unlike that of Epicurus. He supposed animals to have sprung up out of a humid, warm, and earthly matter, and afterwards to have generated one another. \*

Socrates comes next to be considered, who was, in several respects, the best and most excellent of all the philosophers that lived before the coming of our Saviour. Xenophon observes concerning him, that he did not discourse about the heavens, and how the world had its origin; and that he greatly blamed the folly and arrogance of those who were wont to speculate upon these matters, which he looked upon to be above the comprehension of human reason; and thought that such disquisitions were not acceptable to the gods. And indeed the philosophers before him, who had professed to search into the nature and origin of things, had fallen, for the most part, into such wild and extravagant hypotheses, and which only tended to lead men into atheism, that it is not to be wondered at that Socrates declined and discouraged such inqui-

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\* Laërt. lib. ii. segm. 9. The learned Dr. Campbell looks upon this to be a proof that Anaxagoras did not arrive at the notion of an Infinite Mind merely by an effort of his own reason, in inquiring into the cause and connexion of things. And it must be owned that this gives one no very favourable opinion of his ability in arguing from the works of nature to the existence and perfections of the Deity. Nor can any man prove that he had not the first hint of it from ancient tradition. Yet, on the other hand, it cannot be proved that it was not possible for him to have attained to it, in the exercise of his own reason. Human reason will often discover part of a truth and not the whole, and will argue justly and consequentially in one instance, and very extravagantly in another, relating to the same subject. Allowing that Anaxagoras was convinced in general, and that his reason led him to conclude that a pure and intelligent mind, and not stupid matter, was the first cause and principle of motion, and of the orderly disposition of things in the universe, yet it may well be supposed that, like the other philosophers of those times, he valued himself upon accounting for the several particular phenomena of nature by hypotheses of his own; and accordingly endeavoured to show his sagacity by pointing out to what he judged might be the probable natural causes of the formation of animals. But his attempts that way only furnished new proofs of the weakness of human reason, when trusting merely to its own force, in inquiries of this nature. He seems to have had no notion of the wisdom of God, so conspicuous in the human frame, and which the Royal Psalmist celebrates in that noble and devout strain: "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works," &c.

ries.\* Yet, as was before observed, he approved the main principle of Anaxagoras concerning an infinite mind as the cause of the regular order of things in the universe: though he found fault with him for not making a right application of this excellent principle.

Let us therefore inquire what use Socrates himself made of it. And to this purpose I shall produce some passages out of Xenophon's memorable things of Socrates. For it is generally agreed that his account of Socrates' sentiments is written with greater clearness and simplicity, and is more to be depended on, than that given us by Plato, who seems frequently to put his own sentiments upon us, under his master's name.

The conversation of Socrates with Aristodemus is one of the most valuable things which Pagan antiquity hath left us. Aristodemus is represented as a man who had little regard to religion, and was even apt to turn it into ridicule. The design of Socrates was to bring him to a right sense of God and of a Providence, and of the worship and honour justly due to the Divinity. With this view he makes some excellent reflections on the admirable fabric of the human body, the fine disposition of its parts, and the useful purposes to which they are manifestly designed; as also on the noble faculties and powers of the human soul, in order to show that these things were not made or constituted by chance, but with wonderful wisdom as well as goodness. He mentions the understanding or prudence that is in the universe, “*τὴν ἐν παντί φρόνησιν*,” and which ordereth all things in the manner that is most agreeable to it.† He represents the eye of God as seeing all things at once, and seems to point to one author of the human frame, who made men from the beginning, “*ὁ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ποιῶν ἄνθρωπους*.”‡ And yet it cannot but be observed with concern, that, through the whole of

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\* Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. cap. 1. segm. 11, 12, 13. et lib. iv. cap. 7. segm. 5, 6.

† Ibid. lib. i. cap. 4. segm. 17.

‡ Ibid. segm. 5.



that dialogue, he generally speaks of the gods in the plural number. He represents the gods as the authors of the human frame, as exercising a constant care over mankind, and ordering all things for our use and benefit, and as seeing and knowing all things.\* The conclusion of the dialogue deserves special notice. "If thou makest trial," says he, "of the gods, by worshipping them, whether they will give thee counsel concerning things which are obscure to men, thou shalt know the Divinity, that it is so great and of such a nature, that they" that is, the gods "both see and hear all things, and are every where present, and take care of all things at once."† Here he seems to speak in high terms of the Divinity, τὸ θεῖον. And if the words were taken separately, we might be apt to interpret it of the one true God, and of him only; but it appears from what goes immediately before and follows after, that he applies this not to one God only, but to the gods, and seems to represent the divinity he speaks of, not as peculiar and appropriate to one, but that there is a plurality of gods who are sharers of it, and to whom the glorious divine characters he mentions belong. And accordingly Xenophon concludes the account he gives of the conversation of Socrates with Aristodemus with this reflection: that "Socrates, by saying such things, endeavoured to engage those he conversed with, not only to abstain from things impure, unjust, and base, when they were seen of men, but even when they were in solitude, as being persuaded that none of their actions can be concealed from the gods."‡

The same observation may be made on Socrates' conversation with Euthydemus, of which also Xenophon gives an ac-

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\* Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. segm. 11, 12, 13, 14.

† Ibid. s. 18. Γινώσκῃ τὸ θεῖον, ὅτι τοσαῦτον καὶ ταῦτον ἔστι, ὃς δ' ἅμα πάντα ἰσχύει, καὶ πάντα ἐπύκει, καὶ πανταχῶ παρίσται, καὶ ἅμα πάντων ἐπιμειλίθει αὐτός. i. e. θεός, of whom he had spoken just before.

‡ Ibid. segm. 19.

count. \* There is one passage in this dialogue which deserves to be particularly considered. He advises Euthydemus not to wait to see the forms of the gods, but to think it sufficient to behold their works, in order to the worshipping and honouring them, since it is thus that the gods manifest themselves to us. "For," says he, "both the other gods, when they bestow good things upon us, do it in such a manner as not themselves to come into open view: and He that frameth and containeth the whole world, in which are all good and beautiful things, and who preserveth it always in a sound and undecaying state for the benefit of those that use it—is seen to perform the greatest things; yet whilst he orders and governs all this, is himself invisible to us." † He seems here plainly to point to a singular being, as distinguished from "οἱ ἄλλοι—the other gods," and describes him by the sublime character of "ὁ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον συντάττων τὶ καὶ συνέχων, ἐν ᾧ πάντα καλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ ἔσι—He that frameth or putteth in order, and containeth the whole world, in which are all good and beautiful things." Yet he elsewhere in his conversation with Aristodemus uses nearly the same expressions concerning the gods; that "they have framed or put in order the greatest and most beautiful things—θεῶν τὰ μέγιστα καὶ κάλλιστα συνταξάντων." ‡ And he there particularly ascribes to them the contriving and forming the human constitution. § And the professed design of the whole discourse with Euthydemus, of which the noble passage I have been now considering is a part, is to show that the gods take care of and continually do good to men, and therefore ought to be worshipped. Accordingly he all along sets himself to demonstrate the great care and goodness of the gods, in providing both for our necessity and convenience, and for our pleasure; and also in giving us sense, reason, speech, and causing the heavenly bodies, the earth, seasons, and the various kinds of animals, to minis-

\* Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. iv. cap. 3.

† Ibid. lib. i. cap. 4. s. 13.

‡ Ibid. s. 13.

§ Ibid. s. 11, 12.

ter to our use and benefit. All these things he ascribes to the providence of the gods, and mentions them as instances and proofs of their benevolence towards mankind. And he concludes this excellent discourse with observing that "we ought to honour the gods according to our ability, and confidently to hope for the greatest blessings from them. For no man in his right senses can expect to receive greater things from others than from those who have it in their power to do us good in the greatest instances. Nor can any man hope for this in any other way but by pleasing them. And how can he please them better than by obeying them to the utmost of his power?"\* Thus it appears, that if this great man had a notion, as it is probable he had, of one divine Being, superior to the other deities, yet he takes little notice of him as distinguished from the rest. He still seems to have a plurality of gods in view, whom he recommends upon all occasions to the esteem, the adoration, and obedience of mankind: from whom flow all good things, on whose favour we continually depend, and whom we are under indispensable obligations to please, to worship, and obey. And what has been observed concerning Socrates, may be also applied to Xenophon, who was a close follower of that great philosopher.

The celebrated Plato, who was another of Socrates' disciples, has several passages which seem to contain an express acknowledgement of one supreme God. He calls him, in his *Timæus*, "ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ ὁ πατὴρ τῶδε τοῦ πάντος—the Maker and "Father of this universe;" and describes him, in several parts of his works, by a variety of most magnificent epithets: "ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεός—the God who is over all: τῆς φύσεως κτίστης—the Builder or Framer of nature: πάντων αἴτιον—the Cause of all things:" and represents him as the "τὸ ὄν—the Being," by way of eminency, or "τὸ ὄν—τὸ ἄγαθόν,—the [chief] good." But these sublime speculations he thought it

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\* Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. iv. cap. 3. s. 17.

neither proper nor safe to communicate to the people. Nor does he propose him to them as the object of their worship. He every where on all occasions mentions the gods. When he undertakes to prove the existence of a Deity against the Atheists, what he sets himself to prove is, that there are gods: when he argues for a providence, it is the providence of the gods. And the gods he principally recommends to the people as the objects of their worship, their trust, and dependence, are heaven and the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars, and the gods publicly adored, and established by the laws. This I only mention here, as I shall give full proof of it in another place.\*

The sentiments of the famous Aristotle concerning the Deity are not very clear or consistent. He blames those who ascribed the original of motion to chance or fortune, or mere matter, and asserts one eternal first mover, whom he calls the supreme God. He describes him by noble epithets, as eternal, indivisible, immutable, without all parts and magnitude, without all body, and not united to matter. But when we examine more narrowly into his sentiments, this supreme God is only the intelligence, which either as a soul animates, or as a separate form superintends the uppermost sphere of heaven, which revolveth from all eternity in one uniform orbicular motion, of all others the most perfect: and thence communicates motion to all other parts of the universe. But then he holds, that there are several other spheres, everlastingly revolving, which have their distinct intelligences animating or superintending them, each of whom are eternal and immortal beings, and like the First Mover unchangeable, indivisible,

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\* There seems to be a just foundation for the charge which Velleius, in Cicero brings against Plato. Having observed that Plato says, that the Father of the world cannot be so much as named, and that God is without body, he adds, "Idem et in Timæo dicit, et in legibus, et mundum Deum esse, et cælum, et astra, et terram, et animos, et eos quos majorum institutis accepimus: quæ et per se sunt falsa perspicuè, et inter sese vehementer repugnantia." De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 12. p. 32.

without bodily parts or magnitude. And therefore they are truly and properly gods, as well as he that inhabits or superintends the highest sphere. And accordingly he declares, that these are the gods which ancient tradition teaches; and recommends this as the true original theology: and that the other gods, by which he means the hero deities, were invented afterwards for the purposes of civil government, and to keep the people in obedience to the laws.\*

If we go from the Greeks to the Romans, who derived their philosophy from the Greeks, the most eminent of them was that great man Cicero. And the proper place to look for his sentiments on this subject, seems to be in his celebrated books *De Natura Deorum*, where he treats professedly concerning this matter. It is true, that according to the manner of the new academy he there disputes on all sides, without coming to a positive determination. But the declaration he makes in the conclusion of the whole directs us to what he thought the most probable opinion. And by that declaration it appears, that the Stoical doctrine concerning God, and which was maintained by Balbus, throughout the second book, was what he most approved. He there makes Balbus argue with great strength and eloquence from the beauty, and order, and wise contrivance of the works of nature, that they did not owe their original to chance, or to a fortuitous concourse of atoms. But then the result of his argument is to prove, that the world, as animated by a universal soul, is God: and that this soul is an intellectual fire or ether, pervading the whole universe, and producing things according to their natures.† And he argues also for the divinity of the stars, as animated by the same universal soul. And this may help us to judge of the

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\* Arist. *Metaphys.* lib. xiv. cap. 8. *Oper.* tom. II. p. 1003. Edit. Paris, 1629. See a fuller account of Aristotle's sentiments, confirmed by express references to several parts of that philosopher's works, in Dr. Campbell's *Necessity of Revelation*, p. 276, et seq.

† The doctrine of the Stoics concerning God will be more particularly considered in the following chapter.

· true meaning of several other passages, which have been often quoted from this justly admired author, relating to the Deity. Nothing is more certain than that he generally speaks of a plurality of gods, and this even when he is arguing for the existence of a Deity and a Providence, against the Atheists and Epicureans; and that he was for encouraging and promoting the worship of the popular divinities established by the laws. But of this I shall have occasion to treat more distinctly afterwards.

From the account which hath been given of the most excellent of the Pagan philosophers who flourished before our Saviour's coming, it appears that their schemes of philosophy or theology were not calculated to recover the nations from that idolatry and polytheism in which they were so deeply and generally involved. The good things they taught were mixed with great errors; or if we should suppose them to have been never so right in their own notions, they wanted a proper authority to enforce their instructions upon mankind. Nor can their attainments be justly brought as a proof of the powers of human nature in matters of religion, when left merely to itself and its own unassisted force, except it can be shown that the notions they taught were merely the product of their own inquiries, independently of all foreign instruction and assistance. But whatever may be supposed of the possibility of this, yet, as far as we can judge by the accounts antiquity has left us, this was not in fact the case. I am very sensible that many are unwilling to own that the heathens, especially their wise men and philosophers, derived the knowledge they had of God and of the main principles of natural religion from any other source than merely the light of their own natural reason, without any help from revelation or tradition. This is what the learned Dr. Sykes has set himself to show, in his "Principles and Connexion of Natural and Revealed Religion," and particularly in the 14th and 15th chapters of that book, which take up near a third part of the whole. He thinks that as those principles are very reasonable in themselves, men of such great abilities, as they certainly were,

might easily discover them by their own reasonings. But this seems to me not to be a very just way of arguing to prove that they actually did so. Many things there are which appear to be perfectly agreeable to reason, when once discovered, which yet men left to themselves would not have actually found out by the mere force of their own reason, without instruction and assistance.\* If we allow the heathens themselves to be proper witnesses in this matter, it appears from their testimony, that they had a principal part of their knowledge from tradition and foreign helps. The learned Doctor himself is obliged to make acknowledgements which are not very consistent with his scheme. He owns that Plato, who excelled all the philosophers before Christ's coming, in sublime speculations concerning the Divinity, "learned from foreigners the grand principles of his philosophy, and that he himself confesses it."† He says that "Clement, in his *Stromata*, does certainly prove that the Greek philosophy was principally derived from what they called the barbarian."‡ And that "Eusebius has truly proved, that the Greeks derived their knowledge from foreigners." And that this is "proved beyond all possible contradiction by authorities unquestionable."§ Yea, he goes so far as to declare that "it is very plain that the best and wisest men among the Greeks travelled from Greece into Egypt, to get at the knowledge of the Unity, and the like important truths."|| This appears to me to be in effect a giving up the main point he proposed to prove, which was, that the heathens obtained their knowledge of God and his perfections, and of the great articles of natural religion,

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\* See concerning this the introductory Discourse, p. 4, 5, and the testimonies there produced. I shall here add another great authority, from a celebrated ancient, which has been mentioned by the learned author of the *Divine Legation of Moses*. It is taken from Cicero's 3d book, *De Oratore*, cap. 31. "Nam neque tam est acris acies in naturis hominum atque ingeniis, ut res tantas quisquam nisi monstras possit videre: neque tanta tamen in rebus obscuritas, ut eas non penitus acri vir ingenio cernat, si modo adspexerit."

† Sykes' *Principles and Connexion of Nat. and Rev. Religion*, p. 480, 481.

‡ Ibid. p. 479.

§ Ibid. p. 494.

|| Ibid. p. 383.

merely by the exercise of their own powers, and the right use they made of their reason, without the help of revelation or tradition. For if any of the ancient heathens may be supposed to have attained to the true knowledge of God and the main principles of natural religion, solely by their own rational inquiries, the Greeks certainly bid the fairest for it, who were remarkable for the fineness and penetration of their genius; and yet, by his own acknowledgment, they did not attain to it by the force of their own reasoning, but had it by tradition and instruction from others: though they might easily find out arguments to support what they had thus received. Our author seems to be sensible that this is unfavourable to his hypothesis: and therefore he insinuates that the Egyptians, from whom the Greeks derived their knowledge, "had learned their notions, "not from any tradition at all, but had by search found out "those things of themselves."\* But what likelihood is there that the Egyptians found them out of themselves, when he owns that the best and greatest philosophers of Greece, who were much more remarkable for cultivating the arts of reasoning, did not so? Nor indeed was this the Egyptian method of philosophizing; they did not reason out the principles of their theology, but professed to have derived it from ancient tradition, which they kept as a secret to themselves, and carefully concealed from the people; though they were far from keeping it pure and uncorrupted. And the higher we mount towards the first ages, the less probability there is that men found out those principles by their own unassisted reason. Afterwards, in the ages of learning and philosophy, it might have been justly expected that they would have carried these principles to a high degree of improvement; but notwithstanding the helps the philosophers were furnished with, both from ancient tradition and their own rational disquisitions, they were not to be depended upon as proper guides to mankind in religion, as has been already shown, and will further appear from what I proceed to offer on this subject.

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\* Sykes' Principles and Connexion of Nat. and Rev. Religion, p. 496.



## CHAP. XIII.

*Further proofs of the wrong sentiments of the ancient philosophers, in relation to the Divinity. Plutarch's opinion, and which he represents as having been very general among the ancients, concerning two eternal principles, the one good, the other evil. Those philosophers who taught that the world was formed and brought into its present order by God, yet held the eternity of matter; and few if any of them believed God to be the Creator of the world in the proper sense. Many of them, especially after the time of Aristotle, maintained the eternity of the world in its present form. It was an established notion among the most celebrated philosophers, and which spread generally among the learned Pagans, that God is the soul of the world, and that the whole animated system of the world is God. The pernicious consequence of this notion shown, and the use that was made of it, for encouraging and promoting idolatry and polytheism.*

THE celebrated Plutarch flourished after Christianity had made some progress in the world. But no man was better acquainted with the opinions of the ancient Pagan philosophers that lived before him. He acknowledged one perfectly wise and good God, the author of all good, and of the order so conspicuous in the universe. But not being able to account for the evil that is in the world under the administration of a good God, he asserted also a co-eternal evil, or disorderly principle: though he supposed the former, the good principle, to be the most prevalent. This was an opinion he zealously maintained, as appears from several passages in his writings; particularly in his *Timæan Psychogonie*, his *Platonic Questions*, and his treatise of *Isis and Osiris*. And he asserts it to have been the general sentiment of the most ancient and famous nations, and of the wisest and greatest persons among them; some of them directly asserting two gods, others calling only the good principle God, as Plutarch himself does, and the evil one a demon.\* That philosopher affirms that this notion obtained among the Persians, and may be traced in the astrology of the Chaldeans, in the mysteries and sacred rites of the Egyptians, and among the

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\* Plut. De Isid. et Osir. Oper. tom. II. p. 369, 370. Edit. Francof.

Greeks themselves. And he endeavours to show that the most eminent philosophers were in the same sentiments, particularly Pythagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and others. In this however his prejudices in favour of his own opinion seem to have carried him too far. Dr. Cudworth has taken pains to clear these philosophers from the charge; and says that, for ought we can yet learn, Plutarch himself, Numenius, and Atticus, were the only Greek philosophers who, in their public writings, openly maintained that opinion. But it is not probable that, if this had been the case, Plutarch, who was so well acquainted with the history and tenets of the philosophers, and so able a judge of them, would have asserted it to be so general as he has done. Dr. Cudworth himself afterwards mentions Apuleius, as in the same way of thinking. And it seems to have obtained among many of the oriental philosophers.

But not to insist upon this, it deserves our notice, that few, if any, of the Pagan philosophers acknowledged God to be, in the most proper sense, the Creator of the world. By calling him “*Δημιουργος*—the maker of the world,” they did not mean that he brought it out of non-existence into being, but only that he built it out of pre-existent materials, and disposed it into a regular form and order. Even those philosophers, who held God to be an incorporeal essence, yet supposed two first principles of things, really distinct from one another, both existing from eternity, an incorporeal mind, and passive matter. Of this opinion was Anaxagoras; so also was Pythagoras, as Numenius affirms, Archelaus, Archytas, and other Pythagoreans. Parmenides and Empedocles asserted, that God could not make any thing, but out of pre-existent materials. Laërtius expressly asserts, that Plato held two principles, God and matter; and that matter is without form and infinite, but God put it in order.\* Plu-

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\* Laërt. lib. iii. segm. 69. where see M. Casaubon's note upon it; as also Menage's observations. Dr. Cudworth endeavours to show that Plato held that God created matter; but it would not be difficult to answer his arguments.

tarch also ascribes this opinion to Plato, and to Socrates too, only he adds a third principle, viz. ideas. *De Placit. Philos.* lib. i. cap. 3. *Oper. tom. II. p. 878.* He himself plainly asserts the eternity of matter; and argues that God could not have formed the world, if he had not had matter to work upon.\* Laërtius observes, concerning the Stoics, that they held there were two principles of the universe, “το ποιούν και το πάσχον—the active and the passive. The passive is rude unformed matter; the active is the reason which acteth in it, that is God.”† This opinion of the Stoics is very clearly explained by Seneca, in the beginning of his 65th epistle. And Zeno, in a passage cited by Stobæus, says that “the first essence of all things that exist is matter, and that this is all of it eternal, and not capable of being either increased or diminished—οὐσίαν τῇν τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων, πρώτην ἕλην, ταύτην δὲ πᾶσαν αἰδίον οὔτε πλείω γεγνημένην οὔτε ἐλάττω.”‡ Cicero, as quoted by Lactantius, says, that “it is not probable that the matter of things, out of which all things were made, was formed by Divine Providence; but that it hath, and always had, a force and nature of its own.” And he goes on to argue, that “if matter was not made by God, neither was earth, air, water, and fire made by him.”§ The famous Galen, after having acknowledged that the opinion of Moses, who ascribed the production of all things to God, is far more

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Plato indeed supposes mind to be prior to body: but by body he does not understand the first matter, but that which is formed out of it. The learned Mosheim, in his Latin translation of the Intellectual System, has, as I am informed, for I have not his book by me, a long dissertation to prove that Dr Cudworth is mistaken, and that Plato did really hold, that matter was eternal; and indeed there are many authorities to prove it.

\* *Plut. Psychogon. Oper. tom. II. p. 1014. B. C.*

† *Laërt. lib. vii. segm. 134.* See also, to the same purpose, *Plutarch De Placit. Phil. lib. i. cap. 3.*

‡ *Stob. Eclog. Phys. lib. i. cap. 14. p. 29. Edit. Plantin.*

§ *Lactant. lib. ii. cap. 8.* Davies thinks this was taken by Lactantius from Cicero's third book, *De Nat. Deorum*, some parts of which are now lost. See the fragments at the end of the 3d book, *De Nat. Deor. Edit. Davies. 2d. p. 342, 343.*

agreeable to reason than that of Epicurus, who attributed the whole frame to a fortuitous concursion of atoms, yet asserts the pre-existence of matter: and that the power of God could not extend itself beyond the capacity of matter which it wrought upon: and that this was that in which Plato, and those of the Greeks who wrote rightly upon the nature of things, differed from Moses. I would observe, by the way, that here is a plain proof that the learned heathens were sensible that Moses held that God not only formed the world out of matter, but created the matter itself out of which the world was made, which the Greek philosophers denied. See Galen, *De Usu Part.* lib. ii. ap. Stilling. *Orig. Sacræ*, book iii. chap. 2. p. 441. edit. 3d. The learned Dr. Thomas Burnet, who was well acquainted with the opinions of the ancients, says, that the Ionic, Pythagoric, Platonic, and Stoic schools all agreed in asserting the eternity of matter: and that the doctrine, that matter was created out of nothing, seems to have been unknown to the philosophers, and which they had no notion of.\*

It would be carrying it too far to say, that they who did not acknowledge God to have created the world from nothing, were not really Theists, or that they left no place for religion. For supposing that there is a supreme eternal mind, of perfect wisdom and goodness, which formed this world out of crude passive matter, and disposed it into that regular and beautiful order in which we behold it, though he did not originally give existence to that matter itself, yet even on this supposition, it would be reasonable for men to pay their religious adoration and obedience to the great Orderer and Framers of this vast system, and who still continueth to govern it. But though such persons could not be justly charged with atheistical principles, yet I think Dr. Cudworth very properly calls them "imperfect Theists;" and observes that they had not "a right genuine idea of God." They absurd-

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\* *Archæol.* lib. i. cap. 12.

ly ascribed necessary existence, the noblest of the divine prerogatives, and which really comprehendeth all others under it, to such a mean, inert, imperfect thing, as they themselves represented matter to be. They limited the divine omnipotence, and could not maintain it in its just extent: since upon their scheme God could neither create nor annihilate matter, but could only change or vary its forms. Nor can I see how they could consistently suppose that he had a power even of doing this. For if matter existed from everlasting, by a necessity of nature, it must be uncaused and independent. And on this supposition it is hard to conceive how he should have such power over it, as not only to put it in motion, out of its natural state of rest, but to change, fashion, and model it according to his own will, as he must do in forming the universe.\* Many of those who maintained that hypothesis, supposed that matter might in several respects not be duly obsequious to his operations: and that, through the ineptitude of the materials, he might not be able to order things as he would, but only did the best the matter he worked upon would allow him to do. This is hinted in those queries proposed by Seneca. “Quantum Deus possit? Mate-

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\* Those that held matter to be uncreated, eternal, and necessarily existent, did in effect ascribe to it the most essential and fundamental attribute of the Deity. Plato calls God the *τί ὅν*, as being that which properly is, or exists. For, as Cicero observes, Plato would not allow any thing which hath a beginning and ending, to have a real being and existence; and asserts that that only is or exists which is always such. “Nihil Plato putat esse quod oriatur et intereat; idque solum esse quod semper tale sit.” *Tuscul. Disp. lib. i. cap. 24.* Plutarch has some noble speculations on this subject, in his tract on the word *EI*, inscribed on the temple of Apollo, at Delphi. He shows that it cannot be so properly said of God, that he was or will be, as that he is; that this signifies that he is the same eternal, independent, immutable being, the only being that has a true and stable existence. How he and other philosophers could, in consistency with this, hold matter to be eternal and uncreated, and yet mutable, the subject of so many changes, is hard to see. Those philosophers, though otherwise very absurd, were more consistent with themselves, who, holding matter to be eternal, maintained that it was immoveable and invariable, and that all the mutations we see in it are nothing in reality, but are appearances only.

“ riam ipse sibi formet, an datâ utatur? Utrum Deus, quic-  
 “ quid vult, efficiat, an in multis rebus illum tractanda destitu-  
 “ ant, et a m̃agno artifice pravè formentur multa, non quia  
 “ cessat ars, sed quia id in quo exercetur sæpe inobsequens  
 “ arti est? \*—that is, How far the power of God extends?  
 “ Whether he formed the matter for himself, or maketh use  
 “ of it when provided for him? Whether God can effect what-  
 “ soever he willeth; or in many things the materials he is to  
 “ work with disappoint him? Whereby it comes to pass, that  
 “ many things are ill framed by the great artificer; not that his  
 “ art is deficient, but because that which it is exercised upon  
 “ often proves stubborn and untractable to his art?” Ac-  
 cordingly many of the philosophers, and particularly the  
 Stoics, resolved the origin and cause of evil into the contuma-  
 ciousness and perversity of matter; though, as Plutarch argues  
 against them, it is absurd to imagine that matter, which they  
 supposed to be void of all quality, could be the cause of evil.†

Indeed the later Platonists and Pythagoreans, who lived  
 after Christianity had been for some time published to the  
 world, Plotinus, Jamblichus, Proclus, and others, held that  
 matter was not absolutely self-existent, but owed its existence  
 to God as the original cause: but even they did not admit a  
 proper creation of matter. They would not allow that the  
 world had a beginning, but supposed it to have proceeded  
 eternally from God, by way of emanation or eradiation, as  
 light from the sun.

And this leads to another instance, in which the philoso-  
 phers perverted the ancient tradition, and, instead of improv-  
 ing in divine knowledge, fell from the original truth derived  
 from the first ages. The Pagans had, as was observed before,  
 a traditionary account that the world had a beginning, and  
 that it was created by God. This doctrine, as far as it re-  
 lated to the world's having had a beginning, obtained among  
 the ancient Egyptians, as Laërtius informs us from Hecataeus

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\* Seneca Quæst. Nat. lib. i. in proœmio.

† Plut. Psychogon. Oper. tom. II. p. 1014, 1015.

and Aristagoras. In this they were followed by the most ancient of the Greek theologues and philosophers. But though both the one and the other acknowledged the temporary beginning of the world, as Epicurus did afterwards, they dropped that part of the ancient tradition which was of principal importance, viz. that the world was made by God. Anaxagoras agreed with them, that the world had a beginning: but then he ascribed the formation of it to an intelligent mind: yet this, according to him, was only a putting that rude and disorderly mass of matter, which he supposed to be eternal, into order, and disposing it into the present system. The famous Aristotle was not satisfied with this, but entirely rejected the ancient traditionary accounts of the temporary origin of the world, and maintained it to be eternal both as to matter and form. He says that all the philosophers before him, asserted that the world had a beginning.\* So they did for the most part, but it is not true of them all. Ocellus Lucanus, the Pythagorean, who lived before Aristotle, argued for the eternity of the world, as appears from his book of the Nature of the Universe, still extant. Xenophanes is mentioned by Plutarch, as of the same opinion.† And Stobæus imputes this opinion to some others of the Greek philosophers before the time of Aristotle. The ancient Chaldeans, according to Diodorus Siculus, held that the world is eternal, and was neither generated, nor is liable to corruption: though this cannot be true of all the Chaldeans, if what Berosus, their own historian, saith of them be true, that they supposed Bel to be the maker of heaven and earth; which probably was at first the name of the true God, but afterwards became the name of an idol; being confounded with the sun, and with the hero Belus, one of their first kings. Maimonides tells us, concerning the ancient Zabians, that they held the

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\* Arist. De Cælo, lib. i. cap. 10.

† De Placit. Philos. lib. ii. cap. 4. Oper. tom. II. p. 886.

‡ Eclog. Phys. lib. i. cap. 24. p. 44. Edit. Plantin.

eternity of the world. And among the Greek philosophers, from the time of Aristotle, it became the favourite opinion. It was maintained not only by the Peripatetics, but by all the later Platonists and Pythagoreans, Plotinus, Apuleius, Jamblichus, Alcinous, Proclus, who affirmed, as was hinted before, that the world came from God, as light from the sun. They held indeed, that both the substance and form of matter depended upon the Deity; that therefore it was not self-existent, and could no more subsist without God, nor separately from him, than light without the sun: but then it followed also, that God could not be without the world, any more than the sun can be without its light: that it is a necessary emanation or efflux from him; and does not depend upon the free determination of his own will.

It is true that they argued, as Aristotle had done before them, from the essential activity and benignity of the divine nature, which must have been from eternity in action: and upon this principle they maintained that both the corporeal world, with all things in it, existed from all eternity, and that the souls of men and all other animals were eternal too, without beginning: and that they were coeval with God, who was indeed before them in order of nature, but not of time. But if God be a wise and free agent, the particular communications and effects of his power and goodness must depend upon what seemeth most fit to his infinite wisdom, and upon the counsels and free purposes of his own mind and will: and on that supposition the eternity of the world could not be rightly argued from the eternity of the divine power and goodness. Indeed it cannot be consistently maintained, but upon this principle, that God is a necessary agent, and that all things proceed from him by a necessity of nature. For then the world must be eternal, and not only so, but must necessarily exist as well as he. And indeed the doctrine of these philosophers naturally led to the Spinosan scheme, and terminated in it; the fundamental principle of which is, that all things proceed from God by way of nec-



sary emanation, not of creation; or are the necessary modifications of his infinite essence: a scheme which confounds God and the creatures, and, pursued to its genuine consequences, is subversive of all religion and morality.

The next thing I shall mention, as a farther proof of the wrong notions of the Deity which obtained among the heathen philosophers, and which hath a near affinity with what has been now observed, is, that many of the most celebrated philosophers held the whole animated system of the world, and especially the soul of it, to be God. This, according to Plutarch, was the doctrine of the ancient Egyptians, who tells us, from Hecataeus, that they accounted the first God to be the same with the “τὸ πᾶν—or the universe.” “Τὸν πρῶτον Σιδὸν τῷ πάντι τὸν αὐτὸν νομίζουσι.”\* To this probably refers the famous inscription on the temple of Isis, “I am all that hath been, is, or shall be.” It was a noted maxim, as Dr. Cudworth hath shown, both of the Egyptian and Orphic schools, and maintained by the most eminent philosophers, that God is one and all things. I will not deny what the learned Doctor asserts, that this might at first be intended in a favourable sense, and might signify no more than that the divine essence is diffused through all things, and that God is the cause of all things, and virtually containeth all things in himself. It is thus that he explains that passage of Aristotle in his Metaphysics, where he speaks of some, “who pronounced concerning the whole universe as being but one nature.” “That is,” saith the Doctor, “as virtually containing all things.” But this seems to be only his own gloss upon it. The words in Aristotle are more naturally expressive of an opinion like that of Spinoza, that there is but one substance in the universe. But whatever might have been the original intention of that maxim, that God is one and all things, it was, by the learned Doctor’s own acknowledgment, greatly perverted and abused,

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\* Plut. De Isid. et Osir. Oper. tom. II. p. 354. D.

and gave occasion to their confounding God and the creature in their worship. He observes that it was the mistake and abuse of this one maxim, which was the chief ground both of the seeming and real polytheism, not only of the Greeks and Europeans, but also of the Egyptians and other Pagans; they concluding, that because God was all things, and consequently all things God, that therefore he ought to be worshipped in all things, in all the several parts of the world, and things of nature.\*

This learned writer indeed will not allow that the Egyptians held the material world, that is, as he explains it, the world considered as inanimate, to be the first and chief God: but it follows, from his own account of them, that they held the whole animated system of the world to be God: or, as he expresseth it, "they took the whole system of things, God and the world together, as one deity." He observes that "the *τὸ πᾶν*, or universe, was frequently taken by the Pagan theologers in a comprehensive sense for the Deity with all the extent of its fecundity, or God as displaying himself in the world, or for God and the world both together, the latter being looked upon as nothing but an efflux or emanation from the former." He adds that "the god Pan, among the Greeks and barbarians, was understood in this

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\* Agreeable to this is what we are told concerning the Chinese, that it is a principle universally received among them, and maintained by the three principal sects of China, especially by those of the learned sect, ancient and modern, that all things are the same, one universal substance, only distinguished by accidental forms and qualities. Upon this principle they sacrifice to particular beings, as parts of the universal substance, to heaven, earth, mountains, rivers, &c. F. Longobardi gives an instance, in one of their learned doctors, T. V. Puen Su, who said he might well adore the dish of *cha* or *tea* he then held in his hand, as knowing that *tai kie*, [i. e. the universal substance] was in it, after the same manner that it is in heaven, and in all other parts of the world. And F. Navarette, in his notes on Longobardi's treatise, says that this Chinese maxim, that all things are one and the same, is so plain in their books, and so often repeated, that there can be no doubt of it. See Longobardi's treatise, with the notes upon it, in the fifth book of Navarette's account of the empire of China, in the first volume of Churchill's Collection, &c. p. 181, 184, 185, 191.

"sense: and that *Zeus*; and *Pan*, according to *Diodorus Siculus*, were only two different names of the same deity." And, speaking of those Pagans who acknowledged no higher numen than the soul of the world, he saith "that, as they supposed the whole corporeal world animated to be also the supreme Deity, from thence it plainly followed, that the several parts and members of the world must be parts and members of God."\*

This notion seems to have been very generally received among the more learned Pagans. That eminent antiquary *Varro*, speaking of what he esteemed the natural and true theology, gives it as his own opinion, that "God is the soul of the world, and that this world is itself God—*Deum se arbitrari esse animam mundi, et hunc ipsum mundum esse Deum.*"† And to this sense he interprets the celebrated verses of *Valerius Soranus*:

"*Jupiter omnipotens, regum, rerumque, deûmque,*  
"*Progenitor, Genitrixque deûm, Deus unus et omnis.*"‡

In these verses *Jupiter* the omnipotent is represented as the Father of kings, of things, and of gods, the Mother of the gods, one god and all gods. This *Varro* understands of the world, or the universe. Agreeable to which is that of *Iarchas*, the *bramin*, to *Apollonius*: that "the world is an animal; for it generateth all things, and is both of a male and female nature, performing the part both of father and mother." The same notion runs through many of the verses ascribed to *Orpheus*. The reader may see many other testimonies of the ancients concerning the world's being God, collected by the learned *Gataker*, in his *Annotations on Marcus Antoninus*, p. 145, 146. So much were the heathens possessed with

\* *Cudworth's Intel. System*, p. 343, 344, 533.

† *Apud Augustin. De Civ. Dei*, lib. vii. cap. 9. p. 131.

‡ So it is in the *Benedictine* edition; in other editions the latter clause of the first line runs, "*Regum rex ipse Deûmque.*"

this notion, that because the Jews worshipped no images, and performed their adorations to the Deity with hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, they concluded that they took heaven and the world to be God. Thus Strabo, who is generally an exact and judicious writer, praising Moses for his religious sentiments of God, saith, he affirmed "this one thing only to be God, which containeth us all, and the earth and sea, which we call heaven, and the world, and the nature of the whole,—*ἐν τῷτό μόνον θεόν, τὸ περιέχον ἡμᾶς ἅπαντας, καὶ γῆν, καὶ θάλατταν, ὃ καλεῖται ἑρηνόν, καὶ κόσμον, καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄλων φύσιν.*"\* Diodorus Siculus, as cited by Photius, expresseth himself to the same purpose.†

But none were more strenuous asserters of this notion than the Stoics. Arius Didymus, quoted by Eusebius, saith, concerning the Stoics, that "they call the whole world with all its parts God, and that this is one only.—*ὅλον τὸν κόσμον σὺν τοῖς ἑαυτῷ μέρεσι προσαγορεύουσι θεόν, τῶτον δὲ ἓνα μόνον εἶναι.*"‡ Laërtius, in his life of Zeno, explains the doctrine of the Stoics thus, that they maintained that "the world is governed by mind and providence: and that this mind passeth through every part of it, as the soul doth in us: which yet doth not act in all parts alike, but in some more, in some less.—And that the whole world being a living and rational animal hath, like our souls, its hegemonical or principal part."§ Though they held the whole animated world to be God, yet they supposed that the soul of the world acted principally in one eminent part of it, which sometimes they called God, by way of eminency; though what this was they were not agreed. Zeno, as Velleius in Cicero informs us, said that the ether was God.|| Chrysippus, according to Laërtius, varied, sometimes making it the ether, sometimes the heaven. But

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\* Strabo, lib. xvi. p. 1014. Edit. Amstel. 1707.

† Ap. Phot. Biblioth. cod. 244.

‡ Præpar. Evangel. lib. xv. cap. 15. p. 817.

§ Laërt. in Zen. lib. vii. segm. 138, 139. || De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 14. Vol. I. I i

Cleanthes, according to the same author, held it to be the sun.\* This is also what Cicero observes, in his *Academics*, where he concludes that, “by this disagreement among the wise, we are compelled to be ignorant who is the Lord over us, since we know not whether we serve the sun or the ether.” “Zenoni et reliquis ferè Stoicis æther videtur summus deus mente præditus quâ omnia regantur. Cleanthes—Solem dominari et rerum potiri putat. Ita cogimur dissensione sapientum dominum nostrum ignorare, quippe qui nesciamus, soli an ætheri serviamus.”† Flutarch represents the opinion of the Stoics thus, that “they define the essence of God to be a fiery spirit endued with intelligence, or, as he elsewhere calls it, a technical fire—πῦρ τεχνικόν, having no shape or form, but is changed into whatever it pleases, and assimilates itself to all things.—That it pervadeth the whole world, and receiveth various denominations from the various changes of the matter through which it passeth; and that the world is God, and so are the stars, and the earth, but especially the Intellect which is in the highest ether.”‡

It cannot but give one concern, to observe Balbus, in Cicero, amidst excellent reasonings to prove the existence and providence of the Deity, from the beauty and order of the works of nature, gravely arguing that the world is an animal, and hath intelligence; that it is happy, reasonable, and wise, and that therefore the world is God. This he frequently repeats and insists upon.§ And he argues also from the divinity

\* Laërt. ubi supra.

† Academ. lib. ii. cap. 41.

‡ Plut. De Placit. Philos. lib. i. cap. 6. in the beginning, compared with cap. 7. at the latter end. Oper. tom. ii. p. 879. 882. Origen therefore does not carry it too far, when he charges the Stoics with holding that God is corporeal, and that they do not scruple to say that he is mutable, and capable of all manner of variations, Cont. Cels. lib. i. p. 17. And again, he says they were unable to understand the true nature of God, as absolutely incorruptible, simple, uncompound, and indivisible. Ibid. lib. iv. p. 169.

§ “Sapientem esse mundum, similiter beatum, similiter æternum—nec minus do quicquam melius, ex quo efficitur esse mundum Deum.” De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 8. et cap. 13. et seq.

of the world to that of the stars; and that they are animals, and have sense and intelligence. From whence he concludes that they are to be reckoned in the number of the gods.\* And he proves, from the admirable order and constancy of their courses and motions, that they themselves have reason and understanding, and that they are moved by their own sense and divinity.† Thus they asserted the divinity of the world, in their disputes against atheism; and in proving the existence of God, they argued upon the supposition of his being the soul of the world. So that their way of reasoning against the atheists and Epicureans was so managed as to establish their own wrong system, and lay a foundation for deifying and worshipping the several parts of the universe.

In consequence of this their theology, they held that particular souls were parts of the divine universal soul, and visible and corporeal things parts of his body. “Why should you not think,” says Seneca, “that he has some divine thing existing in him, who is a part of God? This whole in which we are contained is both one thing, and is God: we are both his fellows or companions, and his members.—*Quid est autem, cur non existimes in eo divini aliquid existere, qui Dei pars est? Totum hoc quo continemur, et unum est et Deus: et socii ejus sumus et membra.*”‡ Mar-

\* “Hac mundi divinitate perspectâ, tribuenda est sideribus eadem divinitas, ut ea quoque rectissimè et animantia esse, et sentire atque intelligere dicantur—ex quo efficitur in Deorum numero astra esse ducenda.” *De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 15.*

† “Sequitur ergò ut ipsa suâ sponte, suo sensu, ac divinitate moveantur.” *Ibid. cap. 16. et cap. 21.*

‡ This may perhaps be thought an extravagant flight of Seneca. But the same thing in effect is said by that excellent philosopher Epictetus. In answer to that question, “How any one may be convinced that each of his actions are under the inspection of God?” he insists principally upon this, that “our souls are connected and intimately joined to God, being *μέμνηται καὶ ἀπορρέματα*” *Σύμματα*—members and distinct portions of his essence.” So Miss Carter, in her translation, well represents the sense. “And must he not,” adds Epictetus, “be sensible of every movement of them, as belonging and being co-natural to himself?” And he there afterwards represents God as “having made the sun a small part of himself, if compared with the whole.” *Epict. Dissert. lib. i.*

cus Antoninus often describes God under the character of "the nature of the whole." See, to this purpose, lib. v. s. 10. lib. ix. s. 1. and other places. And he addresses his prayer to the world, lib. iv. s. 23. "Whatsoever is agreeable to thee, O comely world, is agreeable to me.—*πάν μοι συναρμόζει ὃ σοι, εὐάρεστον ἔστι ὃ κόσμος.*" And he adds, "Every thing is acceptable fruit to me, which thy seasons, O nature, bear. From thee are all things, in thee all things subsist, to thee all things return." By the world here, and in other places, he especially understands the soul of the world, which the Stoics made the principle governing part. St. Austin, having mentioned Varro's opinion, that the world is God, adds, by

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chap. 14. So also, in his 2d book, chap. 8. s. 2. he repeats it, that "man is a distinct portion of the divine essence; and represents him as containing a part of God in himself. And advises persons to consider when they are feeding and exercising, that it is a God they feed, and a God they exercise, and that they continually carry a God about with them." In like manner, Marcus Antoninus, speaking of the demon or genius, which Jupiter hath given to every man to be his leader and conductor, by which he means every man's rational soul, calls it *ἀποσπείρωμα ἑαυτοῦ*, which Gataker translates "particulam a se avulsam—a small part plucked from himself." Anton. lib. v. s. 27. The note upon this passage, in the Glasgow translation of Antoninus' Meditations, is this, that "the Stoics conceived the Divine Substance to be an infinitely diffused and all-pervading ether, the seat of all wisdom, power, and goodness; and that our souls were small particles of this ether; and that even those of brutes were particles of the same, more immersed and entangled in the grosser elements." Antoninus elsewhere represents the soul as *ἀπορροή*, an efflux or emanation from the Governor of the world. Lib. ii. s. 4. And he calls every man's mind or rational soul the Divinity within him, and the God within him. Lib. ii. s. 13. lib. iii. s. 5, et 16. lib. v. s. 10. Seneca frequently uses the same manner of expression. But this was far from being a doctrine peculiar to the Stoics. It was shown before that it was the avowed doctrine of Pythagoras and all the Pythagoreans. See above, p. 218. And Cicero seems to represent it as the general opinion of the wisest and most learned men, "A quâ [Natura Deorum] ut doc-tissimis sapientissimisque placuit, haustos animos et libatos habemus." De Divinat. lib. i. cap. 49. To this Horace refers, when he calls the soul "divinæ particulam auræ." And Virgil, in those noted verses of his Georgics, lib. iv. vers. 220, et seq. and Æneid, lib. vi. ver. 724. et seq. Plato has several passages that seem to look this way, as the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moses has shown; but it must be also acknowledged that there are other passages in his works, which have a contrary appearance.

way of explication, as from Varro himself, that “as a wise man, though consisting of body and soul, is denominated wise from his soul, so, though the world consisteth of body as well as soul, yet it is from the soul that it is called God.—*Sicut hominem sapientem, cum sit ex corpore et animo, tamen ab animo dici sapientem ita mundum dici Deum ab animo, cum sit ex animo et corpore.*”<sup>\*</sup> Lactantius’ censure upon these philosophers is certainly very just. That “under the name of nature they comprehend things which are entirely different from one another, God and the world, the artificer and his workmanship; and say that the one can do nothing without the other; as if nature were God and the world mixed together; for sometimes they so confound them, as to make God to be the soul of the world, and the world to be the body of God.—*Naturæ nomine res diversissimas comprehendunt, Deum et mundum; artificem et opus: dicuntque alterum sine altero nihil posse: tanquam natura sit Deus mundo permixtus: nam interdum sic confundunt, ut sit Deus ipsa mens mundi, et mundus sit corpus Dei.*”

It were well if the absurdity of this way of philosophizing were the worst of it. But besides that it gave occasion to some of those extravagant flights of the Stoics, so unbecoming dependent creatures, as if they had a divinity and sufficiency in themselves, which placed them in several respects on an equality with God; this notion was made use of for supporting the Pagan idolatry, and was therefore of the most pernicious consequence to the interests of religion. For, upon this principle, as was hinted before, they deified the several parts of the world, and things of nature, and worshipped them as gods or parts of God. Cicero, in his *Academics*, gives this representation of the sentiments of the Stoics: that they held that “this world is wise, and hath a mind or soul, whereby it formed or fabricated both it and itself;†

<sup>\*</sup> Ap. August. *De Civit. Dei*, lib. vii. cap. vi. p. 129. et *ibid.* cap. 9. p. 131.

† This way of talking, as if God made himself, though very improper and absurd, was used not only by the Stoics, but by Plato and others of the philosophers.



“and ordereth, moveth, and governeth all things: and that  
 “the sun, moon, all the stars, the earth and sea are gods:  
 “because a certain animal intelligence pervadeth and passeth  
 “through all things.—*Hunc mundum esse sapientem, habere  
 “mentem, qua et se et ipsum fabricata sit, et omnia mode-  
 “retur, moveat, regat, erit persuasum etiam solem, lunam,  
 “stellas omnes, terram, mare, Deos esse: quod quædam ani-  
 “malis intelligentia per omnia permeat et transeat.”\** In like  
 manner, the great and learned Varro expressly says that  
 “the soul of the world, and its parts, are the true gods:”  
 and represents this as the sentiment of those who had the  
 justest notions, and were acquainted with the secrets of learn-  
 ing. “*Dicit Varro antiquos simulacra Deorum, et insignia,  
 “ornatusque finxisse; quæ, cum oculis animadvertissent hi  
 “qui adissent doctrinæ mysteria, possent animam mundi ac  
 “partes ejus, id est, veros Deos animo videre.”†* Thus it  
 appears, that the one God of these philosophers was really an  
 aggregate of deities. The unity of God they pleaded for  
 was the unity of the world, which consisteth of innumerable  
 parts: and accordingly the great stoical argument to prove  
 that there is one God was, that there is but one world; but  
 this one divinity was multiplied into as many gods as their  
 were parts of the world, all animated by the same universal  
 soul, and all of them parts of the one God. This theology  
 or philosophy therefore furnished a pretext for worshipping  
 the several parts of the world, and the powers and virtues  
 diffused through the parts of it, under the name of the popu-  
 lar divinities. ‡ And thus, instead of curing the popular su-  
 perstition and polytheism, they confirmed and established it,

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\* Cic. *Academ. lib. ii. cap. 37.*

† Ap. August. *De Civ. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 5. p. 128.*

‡ Thus St. Austin, speaking of what were called the *Dii majorum gentium*, Jupiter, Juno, Saturn, Neptune, Vulcan, Vesta, and others, observes “that  
 “Varro endeavoured to apply them to the elements and parts of the world.—  
 “*Quos Varro conatur ad mundi partes sive elementa transferre.*” *De Civ. Dei,*  
*lib. viii. cap. 5.*

and, and as Plutarch charges the Stoics, filled the air, heaven, earth, and sea with gods. \*

Even after Christianity had spread abroad its salutary light, some of the most eminent pagan philosophers made use of this very notion to justify the heathen polytheism. The celebrated Plotinus, speaking of the soul of the world, saith that "by this," that is, by its soul, "the world is a god: and "the sun is also a god, because animated, and so are the "other stars—*διὰ ταύτην ὁ κόσμος ὅδε θεός, ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἥλιος θεός, ὅτι ἐμφυτός, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἄστρα.*" † Proclus has a long dispute to prove that not only the stars are animated, but also all the other sublunary bodies or elements. "If the world," says he, "be a happy god, then none of the parts of it are godless, or devoid of providence." And he goes on to show that they partake of the divinity of the whole. ‡

It is a just observation of the learned Dr. Cudworth, concerning the latter Platonists and Pythagoreans, that, "in their philosophy, they designedly laid a foundation for their polytheism and creature-worship, that is, for their cosmolatry, astrolatry, and demonolatry;" their idolatrous worship of the world, of the stars, and of demons. Intel. Syst. p. 598. And having shown, that "the world was to some of them the body, to others the temple of God, and in either sense to be worshipped," he adds, "thus we see that the pagans were universally cosmolatæ, or world worshippers, in one sense or other; not that they worshipped the world, as a dead inanimate thing, but either as the body of God, or as the temple or image of God." But he observes, that "neither of them terminated their worship in that which was sensible or visible only, but in that great mind or soul, which framed and governeth the whole world understandingly." Ibid. p. 598, 599. And he had said before, concerning those who held God to be the soul of

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\* De Commun. Notit. advers. Stoicos, tom. ii. p. 1075.

† Ennead. lib. v. cap. 2. p. 483. E.

‡ Proclus, in Tim. Plat. lib. iv. apud Cudw. Intel. Syst. p. 237.

the world, that "they worshipped the several parts and "members of the world, not as being themselves so many "gods, but as parts of one God, or as his powers and virtues, "as making up one God in the whole, which yet might be "worshipped in its several parts."\* Ibid. p. 536, 537. To the same purpose, he elsewhere tells us, that "these personated and deified things of nature were not themselves "properly and directly worshipped by the intelligent Pagans " (who acknowledged no inanimate thing for a God), so as to "terminate their worship ultimately in them; but either relatively only to the supreme God, or else, at most, in a way "of complication with him, whose effects and images they "are; that they were not so much themselves worshipped, "as God was worshipped in them." Ibid. p. 515. This is the most plausible thing that can possibly be said for them, and is the pretence which has been made use of by the ablest and most refined apologists for idolatry in all ages: and yet it is an apology which, if it had any force, might be extended to vindicate the paying religious worship to every thing in nature, under pretence of worshipping God in it. And whereas it is here said, that, at most, they only worshipped the things of nature "in a way of complication with God, whose "effects and images they are," what is this but to say that in their worship they mixed and confounded the creature with the Creator? And accordingly they arrived to that pitch of extravagance, as the Doctor owns, "as to call every thing "by the name of God, and God by the name of every "thing." This excellent writer himself, though he sometimes seems willing to apologize for the Pagan idolatry, yet has passed this just censure upon it. That "the Pagans did "not worship God according to his singular and incommunicable, his peerless and incomprehensible nature, but

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\* It is however to be observed, that they so explained this matter, that these several parts of God were each of them to be regarded and worshipped as so many particular deities, or distinct gods and goddesses, as the learned Doctor himself sometimes acknowledges.

“mingled creature-worship with the worship of the Creator. And that the worshipping God, in his various gifts and effects, under personal names, is a thing in itself absurd, and may also prove a great inlet to atheism, when the things themselves come to be called by those names; as if the good things of nature were the only deities. To worship the corporeal world as the one supreme God, and the several parts of it as members of God, is plainly to confound God and the creature, and not to worship him as the Creator, and according to his separate nature.” \*

It appears from the observations which have been made, how strangely the philosophers, even those of them that were most celebrated and admired, were lost and bewildered in their own reasonings, in things of the highest importance: and consequently how unfit they were to guide the people in religion, and to recover them from their idolatry and polytheism. This furnishes a manifest and convincing proof of the weakness of human reason when left to itself in these matters, and of the delusions of *science falsely so called*. It was therefore upon the justest grounds, that the apostle gave that caution, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.”

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\* See the contents prefixed by him to his 4th chapter, sect. lvii. This was what this learned writer proposed particularly to show, and it is a pity that he did not accomplish this part of his great work.

## CHAP. XIV.

*The greatest and best of the ancient Pagan philosophers generally expressed themselves in the polytheistic strain; and, instead of leading the people to the one true God, they spoke of a plurality of gods, even in their most serious discourses. They ascribed those works to the gods, and directed those duties to be rendered to them, which properly belong to the Supreme.*

ANOTHER thing to be observed concerning the ancient Pagan philosophers, and which shows how improper they were to bring the people to a right knowledge of God and religion, and to turn them from their superstition and idolatry, is, that they generally fell into the common language of polytheism, and talked as much of the gods as any of the people, and this even in their most serious discourses. Instead of urging the worship of the one true God, and endeavouring to preserve on the minds of men a sense of the infinite distance between him and all other beings whatsoever, they recommended to the veneration of the people a plurality of deities, to whom they gave those peculiar attributes and honours which were due to him alone. Zaleucus, the Locrian, who may be regarded as having been a wise philosopher as well as lawgiver, in his celebrated proœmium or preface to his laws, where he argues from the evidences of the divine power, wisdom, and goodness, in the orderly disposition of things in the universe, does not lead the people to the acknowledgment of the one true supreme God, but of a plurality of gods. See the passage quoted above, chap. 2d, p. 62, to which I now add, that he afterwards goes on to urge it upon them as their duty “to remember the gods, both that they really exist, and “that they inflict judgments upon unrighteous persons.”\* To the same purpose, Archytas, a celebrated Pythagorean, in the fragments of his work, *De Lege*, preserved by Stobæus, delivers himself in this manner, that “the first law of the constitution should be for the support of what relates to the gods,

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\* Apud Stob. Serm. 42.

“ the demons, and our parents.” The learned Bishop of Gloucester, who takes notice of this, observes that, “ in like manner, if we may believe antiquity, all their civil institutes were prefaced ; its constant phrase being, when speaking of a legislator, διεκόςμει τήν πολιτείαν ἀπο θεῶν ἀρχόμενος. \*—He set in order the polity, beginning from the gods.”

It has been already observed concerning that best of the ancient philosophers, Socrates, that, in those excellent discourses of his with Aristodemus and Euthydemus, in which he treats particularly of religion and the Deity, he all along speaks of God and the gods promiscuously, as the authors of the human frame, and of all the good things we enjoy. And to this probably Velleius, in Cicero, refers, when he blames Xenophon for introducing Socrates as mentioning now one, then many gods. “ Modo unum, tum autem plures deos.” † The same Socrates, speaking of the unwritten laws, as he calls them, which are observed after the same manner in all places, and which he supposes not to have been made by men, since all men are not of one language, nor could meet together to consult about them and enact them, but to have been given by the gods themselves to mankind, mentions it, in the first place, as a universal law received among all men, “ τὰς θεῶν σεβειν—“ to worship the gods.” As if it were the law of nature obligatory on all mankind, to worship not one God only, but a plurality of deities. Xenophon mentions it to the praise of Socrates, that whereas “ οἱ πολλοί—the generality of men, supposing that there are some things which the gods know, and other things which they do not know, Socrates was of opinion that the gods know all things, both the things which are said, and the things which are done, and even the things which are deliberated upon in secret: and that they are every where present, and give significations to men concerning all human affairs.” ‡ A noble sentence this, if applied

\* Div. Leg. of Moses, vol. I. p. 112. Edit. 4th.

† De. Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 12.

‡ Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. iv. s. 19. p. 327. Edit. Sympson.

to the one true God: but when applied to a multiplicity of gods, tended to mislead the people, and to confirm them in their polytheism, as if there was a number of omniscient, omnipresent deities. The same observation may be made concerning a remarkable saying of Thales, mentioned by Laërtius: being asked, Whether a man in his unjust actions can escape the notice of the gods? He answered, No, not in his thoughts. \*

Plato, in his arguings for the existence of a Deity against the atheists, which he professedly undertakes in his tenth book of laws, speaks all along, of gods in the plural. The point he sets himself to prove in opposition to Atheism, which he represents as at that time much prevailing, is not that there is one God, but that there are gods. And, in the beginning of that book, he introduces one of his dialogists as saying “that it is easy to prove the existence of the gods: the earth, the sun, the stars, and the universe, and the well-ordered variety of seasons, show it: as also the consent both of Greeks and barbarians, who all agree that there are gods.”† In like manner, when, in the same tenth book of laws, he argues for a Providence, what he undertakes to prove is, That the gods take care of mankind and their affairs, and do not neglect even small matters. ‡ And, in his *Epinomis*, or sequel to his books of laws, he lays it down as a principle, “ὡς εἰσὶ θεοὶ ἱκιστα λέμενοι πάντων σμίκρων καὶ μεγάλων.” § That “the gods exist, and take care of all things, both small and great.” And, in his whole disputation on that subject, it is the providence of the gods that he asserts, and even of the gods which are appointed by the laws.

Cicero has many noble passages relating to the existence of a Deity, and a Providence. But they tend to lead the people not so much to the acknowledgment of the one supreme God,

\* Laërt. lib. i. segm. 36.

† Plato Oper. p. 664. E. Edit. Fic. Ludg. 1590.

‡ Ibid. p. 670, 671.

§ Ibid. p. 700. E.

as of a multiplicity of gods. Some notice was taken of this before, in the second chapter of this work. To which I now add, that when he is speaking of the consent of nations, he seems to make it relate, as Plato had done before him, not to the belief of one supreme Cause and Author of all things, but to a plurality of gods or divine powers. He observes, that "it is a strong argument to engage us to believe that there are gods, that there is no nation so wild and savage, no man so rude and uncultivated, whose mind is not imbued with the opinion that there are gods. Many have wrong sentiments concerning the gods, but all think there is a divine power, and nature."\* He adds, that "in every thing, the consent of all nations is to be looked upon as the law of nature.—*Ut porrò firmissimum hoc adferri videtur cur deos esse credamus, quod nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam sit immanis, cujus mentem non imbuerit deorum opinio. Multi de diis prava sentiunt, omnes autem esse vim et naturam divinam arbitrantur.—Omni autem in re consensio omnium gentium, lex naturæ putanda est.*"† And again he says, that "it is as it were, engraven on the minds of all men that there are gods. What they are is not agreed, but that they are is denied by none.—*Omnibus innatura est, et animo quasi insculptum, esse deos; quales sint varium est; esse nemo negat.*"‡ And Cota represents it as a thing in which all men agree, except those that are very impious, and which could never be erased out of his mind, that there are gods. "*Quod inter omnes, nisi admodum impios, convenit, mihi quidem ex animo exuri non potest, esse deos.*"§ Many other passages might be produced, in which the consent of nations is

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\* But then it is to be observed, that though all are here supposed to believe that there is a divine nature and power, yet many imagined that this divine nature and power resided in a multitude of deities.

† *Tuscul. Disput. lib. i. cap. 13.*

‡ *De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 4.*

§ *Ibid. lib. iii. cap. 3.*



urged to show that there are gods.\* The same conclusion is drawn from the pulchritude and order of the universe, and other arguments usually brought in proof of a Deity. Balbus, the Stoic, in Cicero's second book, *De Naturâ Deorum*, having mentioned some of those arguments, says that "he that considers them will be forced to confess that there are gods.—*Hæc et innumerabilia ex eodem genere qui vident, nonne cogitur profiteri deos esse?*" He expresses himself to the same purpose, in several other parts of that book. Thus, as was before observed, their very disputes against atheism were so managed, as to uphold and maintain the public polytheism, and were not so much directed to prove that there is one Supreme God, as that there are many gods; all of whom are to be honoured and adored. When Balbus sets himself to show that the world is governed by Divine Providence, which he does admirably well, what he proposes to prove is, that it is by the providence of the gods that the world is administered and governed. "*Deorum providentiâ mundum administrari.*"† And again, that the world and all its parts were constituted in the beginning, and are at all times administered and governed by the providence of the gods. "*Dico igitur providentiâ deorum, mundum et omnes mundi partes, et initio constitutas esse, et omni tempore administrari.*"‡ To the same purpose Cicero observes, in his first book of laws, that "all nature is governed by the power, reason, authority, mind, divinity, of the immortal gods.—*Deorum immortalium, vi, ratione, potestate, mente, numine naturam omnem regi.*"§ And in his second book of laws, he lays it

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\* There is a remarkable passage of Seneca to the same purpose, in the beginning of his 117th epistle. "*Apud nos veritatis argumentum est aliquid omnibus videri: tanquam deos esse inter alia sic colligimus, quod omnibus de Diis opinio insita est, nec ulla gens usquam est adeo extra leges moresque projecta, ut non aliquos deos credat.*"

† *De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 29. p. 175. Edit. Davis. 2do.*

‡ *Ibid. lib. ii. cap. 29. p. 177.*

§ *De Leg. lib. i. cap. 7. p. 25. Edit. Davis. 4to.*

down as a principle, that "the citizens should, in the first place, be persuaded, that the gods are the lords and orders of all things, and that whatsoever things are done in the world, are done and directed by their divine power and authority: that they deserve highly of the whole human race, and diligently inspect what every man is, what he does, what secret faults he is guilty of, with what dispositions of mind and what degree of piety he exerciseth himself in the offices of religion; and that they take an account both of good and bad men. For," says he, "the minds that have imbibed these sentiments will not deviate far from that way of thinking, which is both profitable and true.—*Sit hoc jam in principio persuasum civibus, dominos esse omnium rerum et moderatores deos: eaque quæ geruntur eorum gerit ditione et numine; eosdemque optimè de genere hominum mereri, et qualis quisque sit, quid agat, quid in se admittat, quâ mente, quâ pietate colat religiones, intueri; piorumque et impiorum habere rationem. His enim rebus imbutæ mentes haud sanè abhorrebunt ab utili ac verâ sententiâ.*"\* To this may be added a fine passage of Balbus in Cicero's second book of the nature of the gods, which would have been admirable, if he had applied it to the worship of the one true God. "The best worship of the gods," saith he, "and which is at the same time the most chaste, holy, and full of piety, is that, with a pure, upright, incorrupt mind, and voice we should render them the veneration which is due.—*Cultus deorum est optimus, idemque castissimus atque sanctissimus, plenissimusque pietatis, ut eos purâ, integrâ, incorruptâ et mente et voce veneremur.*"† Such was the language of the wisest and best of ancient Pagan philosophers. They generally spoke not of one God only, but of the gods; and if they sometimes mentioned God in the singular, as Cicero talks of "*aliquis effector aut*

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\* De Leg. lib. ii. cap. 7. p. 94, 95.

† De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 28. p. 174.

"moderator tanti operis," they ascribe no more to him than they do at other times to the gods in the plural; as if there were many that shared with him in the divinity, and were along with him, "domini omnium rerum et moderatores—" "the lords and governors of all things." And accordingly it is usual with them to speak of God and the gods promiscuously; which tended to encourage and confirm the people in their idolatry and polytheism. It is true that, after Christianity had diffused its glorious light, the notion of the one supreme God became more familiar to the heathens, and many even of the vulgar were more sensible of the vanity of polytheism. The philosophers also asserted the one supreme Deity more clearly and fully than they had done before. And yet still continued to express themselves in a manner which had a tendency to uphold and maintain the common established polytheism and idolatry, derived to them from their ancestors. I shall on this occasion take particular notice of two very eminent philosophers, both of whom flourished after Christianity had made some progress in the world, Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus.

I shall begin with Epictetus. He often uses the word God in the singular number, and yet frequently falls into the polytheistical manner of expression. "Be assured," says he, in his *Enchiridion*, \* "that the essential property of piety towards the gods is to form right opinions concerning them, as existing and governing the universe with goodness and justice. And fix yourself in this resolution to obey them, and willingly to follow them in all events, as produced by the most perfect understanding: for thus you will never find fault with the gods, nor accuse them as neglecting you."† Here he makes true piety consist in entertaining right notions of the gods, and in obeying and following them: and he represents the gods as governing the world with the most perfect

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\* Epict. *Enchir.* cap. 31. Ed. Upton. In the common editions it is cap. 38.

† It is with pleasure I make use of Miss Carter's excellent translation of this and other passages of Epictetus.

understanding, justice, and goodness. With this may be compared an admired passage in his Dissertations. "The philosophers say that we are first to learn that there is a God, and that his providence directs the whole; and that it is impossible to conceal from him not only our actions, but even our thoughts and emotions. We are next to learn what the gods are, for such as they are found to be, such must he, that would please and obey them to the utmost of his power, endeavour to be.—And in all his words and actions behave as an imitator of God."\* Here the words God and gods are used promiscuously. It is undoubtedly a lesson of great importance first to know that God is, and next what he is. But Epictetus expresses it thus, that we are first to learn that God is, or that there is a God, and next what the gods are. He urges it as a duty, that a man should, in all his words and actions, behave as an imitator of God. The same thing he says with respect to the gods. "Such as the gods are, such must he, that would please and obey them to the utmost of his power, endeavour to be." He speaks of God's directing the whole by his providence: and he had said the same thing of the gods in still stronger terms in the passage above quoted from his Enchiridion. He here likewise observes that nothing can be concealed from God: and he elsewhere makes the same supposition concerning the gods. "Are not the gods," says he, "every where at the same distance? Do not they every where equally see what is doing?"† Speaking of the desires and aversions, he saith, "yield them up to Jupiter and the other gods: give thyself up to these: let these govern." The title and design of the 13th chapter of the first book of his Dissertations, is to show how every thing may be performed acceptably to the gods: and he there talks of the laws of the gods as what men are obliged to obey. When he mentions the celebrated saying of

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\* Epict. Dissert. Book ii. chap. 14. s. 2.

† Book iv. chap. 4. at the end of that chapter.

Socrates, in one place he has it thus, "if it pleases God, "so let it be;" in another, "if it pleases the gods, so let it be."\* He supposes reason to be given to men by the gods.† And, speaking of a man's having subdued his ill nature, his reviling and effeminacy, and having acquired good habits, he adds, "these things you have from yourself and from the "gods." Book iv. chap. 4. s. 6.

I shall next produce some passages from that excellent emperor and philosopher, Marcus Antoninus. "If there are no "gods," saith he, "or if they have no regard to human affairs, why should I desire to live in a world without gods, "and without providence? But gods undoubtedly there are, "and they regard human affairs." What he here asserts as certain and undoubted is, that there are gods, and the providence he speaks of is the providence of the gods.† He gives it as an important advice, "In all things invoke the gods—" *ἐφ' ἅπασι θεῶς ἐπιπαλᾷ.*‡ Upon which Gataker observes that this is a pious advice, if the heathen polytheism were separated from it. "Pium monitum, si ethnicismi πολυθεΐα resecetur." And the same observation may be made on many other passages in Antoninus' Meditations. At the end of his first book, he expressed his thankfulness to the gods, for the benefit of education, for good friends, tutors, parents, virtuous dispositions, for having been preserved from temptations, and placed in advantageous circumstances for improvement. These things he ascribes to the goodness or beneficence of the gods, *θεῶν εὐνοία*. And, in the 40th section of his ninth book, he directs men to pray to the gods, as having power to enable us to do our duty. And he there speaks of the gods as giving

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\* Epict. Dissert. book i. chap. 29. s. 3. compared with the last chapter of the Enchiridion.

† Ibid. book iii. chap. 24. s. 1. This is agreeable to the Stoical maxim, "Prudentiam et mentem a diis ad homines pervenisse." Cic. De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 31.

‡ Antoninus' Meditations, book ii. s. 11.

§ Ibid. book vi. s. 23. So Epictetus says *ὅλως τοῖς θεοῖς*. Dissert. lib. i. cap. 1. s. 2.

us their assistance, even in things which they have put in our own power. The whole of what he there says is admirable, if applied to the one true God. And this, with other passages of the like kind, especially his giving thanks, in the passage just now mentioned, for the advantages he had been favoured with, have been produced as a proof that "this emperor plainly depended on God for sanctifying influences; and, with the deepest humility and simplicity of heart, acknowledges that he owes to God's preventing grace, in his providence about him, all those virtuous dispositions in which he had any delight or complacency."\* Thus it is that Christian writers are apt to apply their own ideas of things, which they borrowed from the Holy Scriptures, to the writings of the heathen philosophers. But Antoninus, in the passages here referred to, makes no mention of the one supreme God. The prayers for assistance, the praises and thanksgivings for benefits received, are rendered not to God, but to the gods. The gods are made the objects of trust and dependence, and the people are led to place that confidence in them which is due to God alone. And this makes a very remarkable difference between the precepts and duties of religion as delivered by him, and those which are prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.†

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\* See the conclusion of the life of M. Antoninus, prefixed to the Glasgow translation of his *Meditations*, p. 71, 72.

† It is not improper to observe, on this occasion, that it is no unusual thing for Christian writers, in their quotations from heathen authors, to produce passages relating to the gods, as a proof that the heathens acknowledged the government and attributes of the Deity, in the Christian sense. An eminent divine, whom I have had occasion to mention before, has undertaken to show that, by the mere light of their own unassisted reason, without any help from revelation and tradition, the heathens "had a knowledge and firm persuasion, that there existed one underived, eternal, supreme, intelligent Being, Creator and Governor of the universe, good, placable, a punisher of vice, and rewarder of virtue, whom they thought it their duty to worship, to pray to him, to praise him; and this Being they called God." Dr. Sykes' *Principles and Connection of Natural and Revealed religion*, chap. xiv. p. 362, et seq. He endeavours to prove the several parts of this proposition distinctly by express testimonies from the heathen writers.

The passages to be further produced will set this in a still clearer light. Antoninus observes that "our natural constitution and furniture is intended—to engage us in kind-

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Most of them are the same that are produced by the learned Dr. Cudworth, the most remarkable of which are considered in the course of this work. If it be allowed that some of them speak of the one true God (the knowledge of whom was, as I have shown, communicated from the beginning, though afterwards amazingly corrupted and depraved), yet still it remains to be proved that they derived this merely from the researches of their own reason, without any assistance from revelation or tradition. And this our learned author strongly asserts, but has not proved. But, to pass this by at present, what I would now observe is, that in proving the several parts of the above-mentioned proposition, he promiscuously produces passages which speak of God and of the gods. Thus, to prove that they held that God is omniscient and omnipotent, he produces passages from Socrates and Plato, in which it is said, that the gods see and know all things: as also that they have power to do whatever can be done. To show that they believed that God governs the world by his providence, he produces passages which ascribe the government of the world to the gods. He observes that "Cicero well argues, that if we grant that God is an intelligent being, we must grant that he directs and governs all things." And yet Cicero, in that passage, as he himself quotes it, speaks not of God in the singular number, but of the gods. "Si concedimus intelligentes esse deos, concedimus etiam providentes, et rerum quidem maximarum." *De Nat. Deor. lib. ii.* When he comes to prove that part of his proposition, that they believed the one God, the Creator and Governor of the world, to be good, placable, the punisher of vice, and the rewarder of virtue, he produces passages to show that "the heathens believed that the gods are placable; but that however placable the gods were deemed, yet they were looked upon as the avengers of evil, and the rewarders of good actions." In like manner, when he is to show that the heathens maintained that God is to be worshipped, he expresses it thus, that "the sentiments they maintained concerning the gods must necessarily lead men to pay them a proper worship, to prayer, praise, thankfulness, and submission to their will; and that effect was produced; and these duties were acknowledged to be due." And accordingly most of the passages he mentions relate to the worshipping of the gods. And, in general, it may be observed, that when he proposes to prove that the heathens had a knowledge and persuasion of the attributes of the one true God, most of the testimonies he brings relate not to the one supreme God, but to the gods; which shows that though the idea of one God was not utterly extinguished among the Pagans, yet it was generally confounded with a multiplicity of idol deities, to whom they applied the peculiar attributes and worship due to the one supreme God: and that Jupiter, whom they vulgarly regarded as the supreme, and to whom some of the passages cited by the Doctor immediately refer, was really no more than the chief of their idol deities. And even among the philosophers themselves, God and the world was frequently confounded together, as making up one divinity.

“ness to all men, and in obedience to the gods.”\* And, in another passage to the same purpose, he represents it as our duty, while life continues, “to worship, and praise, or celebrate the gods, *θεῖς αἰεὶ καὶ εὐφημεῖν*, and to do good to men.”† And again, “love mankind,” says he, “and be obedient to the gods.”‡ To obey God, and do good to men, is certainly a noble summary of our duty. What a pity it is that such fine precepts and sentiments should be weakened and debased by applying them to a multiplicity of gods! For who are these gods whom we are bound to obey? Or, how far are we to obey them? This is to cast the mind into perplexing uncertainties, and to encourage polytheism.

Antonine urges to meekness from the example of the gods. “The gods,” saith he, “exercise meekness and patience towards men, and even aid them in the pursuit of some things, as of health, wealth, glory. So gracious are they! You may be so too.”§ And he elsewhere supposes “the gods to bear with a wicked world through a long eternity.”||

He frequently represents the gods as the causes and orderers of all things. “Does any thing befall me?” says he, “I accept it, as referring it to the gods, the fountain of all things, from whom all things are ordered in a fixed series.”¶ Gataker, in his note upon this passage, produces several texts of Scripture to show that pious men ascribe all things, whatsoever events befall them, to God. But there is this difference between the doctrine of the Scriptures on that head and that of Antonine, that what they teach us to refer to God as the supreme Disposer, he referreth to the gods. In the beginning of his tenth book, sect. 1. he gives excellent advices about

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\* Anton. Med. book iii. s. 9.

† Ibid. book v. s. 33.

‡ Ibid. book vii. s. 31.

§ Ibid. book ix. s. 11. et s. 27.

|| Ibid. book vii. s. 70.

¶ Ibid. book viii. s. 23. In this and other passages here cited I make use of the Glasgow translation of Antoninus' Meditations, which appears to me to be a faithful and elegant one.



our being satisfied with the state we are in, whatsoever it is, and being pleased in every circumstance: but here also he speaks in the polytheistic strain. "Persuade thyself," saith he "that thou hast all things: all is right and well with thee, and comes to thee from the gods. And all shall be right and well for thee which they please to give, and which they are about to give, for the safety of the perfect animal." Here he speaks of all things as coming to us from the gods; that all is right which they please to give or appoint: and represents them as ordering all things for the safety of the universe, which he there calls the most perfect animal,\* and describes, by characters proper to the Divinity, "the good, the just, the fair, the parent of all things, the supporter, the container, the surrounder of all things."

He has several other passages to the same purpose. "As to what happens," says he, "in the common course of nature, the gods are not to be blamed: they never do wrong willingly nor unwillingly."† And he gives it as the character of a just man, that "he followeth the gods with simplicity."‡ To those who ask, "Where have you seen the gods? Or, whence are you assured they exist, that you thus worship them." He answers, "first they are visible, even to the eye." This probably relates to the heavenly bodies, which were regarded as gods by the Stoics. He adds, "My own soul I cannot see, and yet I reverence it: and thus as I experience continually the power of the gods, I know both surely that they are, and worship them."§ This is well argued, if applied to the one true God, whose power, though he be invisible to the bodily eye, extends through every part of the universe, and who is continually present to all his creatures. But the applying it to the gods, as if we were equally sure of the existence of a plurality of deities, and of their being every

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\* In like manner he calls the universe or the world an animal, *Anton. Med.* Book iv. s. 23, et 40.

† *Book xii. s. 12.*

‡ *Ibid. s. 27.*

§ *Ibid. s. 28.*

where present, spoils the force of the reasoning, and the beauty of a noble sentiment.\*

: That celebrated philosopher Plutarch, who also flourished after the gospel was published to the world, frequently falls into the same manner of expression. I shall only mention one passage. It is in his Consolation to Appollonius. "We do not come into life," says he, "as if we could prescribe and make what laws concerning it we please, but must obey the things which are appointed by the gods which govern the universe, and must submit to the decrees of fate and pro-

\* A late ingenious author, who has carried his apologies for the heathens and their religion very far, taking notice that the emperor Marcus Antoninus frequently speaks of gods in the plural, cautions his reader not to be surprised at it; for that "this phrase was common with the Pagans and the Hebrews." Cheval. Ramsay's Principles of Nat. and Rev. Rel. vol. II. p. 448. Where he intimates that it was as common among the Hebrews as among the Pagans to talk of gods in the plural. A strange instance this of the power of prejudice, when engaged in the support of a favourite hypothesis. The contrary must, I think, be evident to any one that ever compared the Jewish and Pagan writings. As to the Pagans, a multiplicity of deities every where appears in their history, poetry, philosophical and moral writings, and runs through the whole of their religion and laws. But the great and fundamental principle of the Jewish religion expressly prescribed by their laws, and which appears in all their writings, historical, poetical, moral, and devotional, is, that there is one only God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, who alone is to be worshipped and adored. And the many gods of the heathens are spoken of with contempt and abhorrence. It is true, that one of the Hebrew names of God, Elohim, seems to be of a plural form, and is sometimes attributed to the creatures: but besides that the most peculiar name of God, Jehovah, is always singular, the word Elohim, when applied to the one true God, is almost constantly joined with a verb singular; and accordingly is in the New Testament always rendered by the word *Θεός*, God: whereas, according to this gentleman's way of representing it, we might expect to meet with the word *Θεοί*, gods, as often in the New Testament as in the Pagan writings. The gods indeed are sometimes mentioned there, when speaking of the Pagan polytheism, but it is with a view to condemn it. Thus, St. Paul saith, "We know there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many and lords many)" where he seems evidently to refer to the Pagan polytheism; "but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." 1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6.

"vidence.—πισόμενοι τοῖς διατεταγμένοις ὑπο τῶν τὰ δὲλα πρυτανικῶν ὅρων θεῶν, καὶ τοῖς εἰμαρμένης καὶ προνοίας δίσμοις."\*

Whosoever impartially considers the passages which have been produced from some of the most eminent heathen philosophers, must, I think, be obliged to acknowledge that their way of representing things in their most serious discourses, tended naturally to take off the attention of the people from the one supreme God, and to lead them to a plurality of deities. Many have spoke with admiration of the piety which breathes in the Stoical precepts. And any one that reads the account given of them by the learned Gataker, in his præloquium or preliminary discourse to his excellent Latin translation and commentary on the Meditations of Antoninus, will be apt at first view to look upon it as a summary of the principal duties towards God prescribed in the Holy Scriptures. But there is this essential difference between them; that the duties which the Scriptures require us to exercise towards the one true God, they direct to be paid to the gods, and thereby impair and corrupt the noblest sentiments, and spread confusion through that which they themselves acknowledge to be the most important part of our duty. And indeed they seem to have had no small confusion in their ideas on this subject. Some might be apt to think that by the gods they understood the one God under different names and manifestations: which was a notion sometimes made use of to put a plausible colour on the Pagan polytheism. But any one that carefully considers the passages which have been mentioned, will find, that in most of them this pretence cannot be admitted, and that the gods are plainly spoken of as distinct really existent divine beings. In a note of the Glasgow translation on that passage of Antoninus, where he says, "the sun is formed for a certain office, and so are the other gods,"† it is observed that "the better sects of the heathen philoso-

\* Plut. Oper. tom. II. p. 111. Edit. Francof. 1620.

† Anton. Medit. book viii. s. 19.

“ phers, besides the one supreme original Deity, conceived  
 “ great numbers of superior natures, invested with great pow-  
 “ ers of government, in certain parts of the universe—and  
 “ that the heathens called those superior beings gods, and  
 “ the Christians called them angels.”\* But nothing is plain-  
 er, than that the philosophers ascribe things to the gods, which  
 no way agree to the idea the Scripture teaches us to form of  
 angels, and which properly belong to the one true God. In  
 several of the passages above mentioned, the gods are repre-  
 sented as the causes and governors of the universe, ordering  
 and directing all things, extending their power and provi-  
 dence to every thing, the smallest as well as the greatest, as  
 every where present and knowing all things, not only all men’s  
 actions, but even their most secret thoughts, as the fountain  
 of all good things, and the disposers of all events, to whom we  
 owe the most absolute subjection, resignation, and obedience,  
 in whose appointments we must always acquiesce, being satis-  
 fied that they never can do wrong, and that they administer  
 all things with the most perfect understandings, righteous-  
 ness, and goodness: that it is our duty to worship and adore  
 them; that to them we must offer up our prayers, and most  
 devoutly and thankfully ascribe the praise of every good thing  
 which befalleth us; that we must refer all things to them and  
 to their will, and in them must place our confidence and trust.

The censures therefore which the learned Dr. Cudworth  
 passed upon the poets, may be justly applied to the most ce-  
 lebrated philosophers. “ That they made the theology of  
 “ the Pagans look aristocratically—by their speaking so much  
 “ of the gods in general, and without distinction, and attri-  
 “ buting the government of the whole to them in common,  
 “ as if it were managed and carried on by a common coun-  
 “ cil and republic of gods,† wherein all things were deter-

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\* Glasgow translation of Antoninus, p. 299.

† Balbus, in Cicero’s second book of the Nature of the Gods, asserts, that “ the  
 world is governed by the council of the gods.—Deorum consilio mundum ad-  
 ministrari.” Cap. 29. p. 177. Edit. Davis, 2do. To the same purpose he  
 Vol. I. M m

“mined by a majority of voices, and as if their Jupiter or supreme God were no more among them than a speaker of the House of Lords or Commons, or the chairman of a committee.”\* The same learned author acknowledges concerning the Stoics, that “they often derogate from the honour of the supreme Deity, by attributing such things to the gods in common as the donors of them, which plainly belong to the supreme God.”†

Thus the philosophers, by talking of God and the gods promiscuously, contributed to confound the notions of the people, and countenanced and confirmed them in their polytheism, and in their veneration for the popular deities.

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represents the gods as joined together by a kind of civil consociation, and governing the world as a common city or republic. “*Inter se quasi civili concili-  
atione et societate conjunctos, unum mundum ut communem rempublicam at-  
que urbem aliquam regentes.*” Ibid. cap. 31. p. 179.

\* Cudworth's Intel. System, p. 357.

† Ibid. p. 427.

## CHAP. XV.

*Some farther considerations to show how little was to be expected from the philosophers for recovering the Pagans from their polytheism and idolatry. They referred the people for instruction in divine matters to the oracles, which were managed by the priests. This shown particularly concerning Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics. It was a universal maxim among them, that it was the duty of every wise and good man to conform to the religion of his country. And not only did they worship the gods of their respective countries, according to the established rites, and exhort others to do so, but when they themselves took upon them the character of legislators, and drew up plans of laws, and of the best forms of government, not the worship of the one true God, but polytheism, was the religion they proposed to establish.*

It is a farther instance of the philosophers' countenancing the popular idolatries and superstitions, that, except the Epicureans and others who denied a providence, they generally encouraged divination and the oracles. Socrates himself was very remarkable this way. Xenophon mentions it as a proof of his piety, that he openly used divination; and speaking of those who thought that the gods signified things to men by birds, omens, presages, and sacrifices, he says, that Socrates thought so too.\* He frequently advised men to follow the direction of the oracles, especially in matters of religion.† And above all he showed a great veneration for the Delphian oracle. Xenophon observes, that when any persons inquired of the Pythian oracle what they should do with respect to sacrifices, and the religion of their ancestors, or any thing of

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\* Xen. Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. cap. 1. s. 2, 3.

† Socrates advised him that would know things above the reach of human wisdom to apply himself to divination. For that that man would never be destitute of the counsel and direction of the gods, who should know and observe by what way they signified things to men. Xen. Memorab. lib. iv. cap. 7. s. 10. This shows the sense he had of the great need men stood in of a direction from above in divine matters, which also appears from several other passages. But it is a mortifying thing to think, that a person of his great understanding should send men for knowing the divine will, to what was then called divination, and to the oracles of the gods.

that nature, the oracle was wont to answer them, that they would act piously, if they performed these things according to the laws of their respective cities; and he informs us, that Socrates, in matters relating to the gods, τὰ πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, both spoke and acted conformably to that direction of the oracle: that he both did this himself, and exhorted others to do so: and looked upon those who acted otherwise as vain and superstitious persons, περιέργους, persons impertinently busy, or that meddled with things which did not belong to them. A remarkable instance of this we have in his excellent conversation with Euthydemus before referred to. When this young man expressed his concern, that he knew not how to make worthy returns to the gods for the many benefits received from them, Socrates bids him not be discouraged at this: "For," says he, "thou seest the god at Delphi, when any one asks him, how he may do that which is acceptable to the gods, answers, By worshipping them according to the law of the city—νόμῳ πόλεως."\* Agreeable to this is the description he gives of piety, and of a pious man. After having observed, that piety is a most excellent and beautiful thing, he describes the pious man to be one that honoureth the gods: but that it is not lawful for any man to worship the gods as he himself thinks fit. There are laws according to which it is to be done: and he who observes those laws may know how the gods ought to be honoured. He concludes, therefore, that he that honoureth the gods according to the laws, honoureth them as he ought: and he who honoureth the gods as he ought, is a truly pious man. This is the substance of Socrates' discourse on this head, as recorded by Xenophon.† Thus we see, it was in Socrates' opinion essential to true piety to worship the gods, and to worship them in the manner and according to the rites established by the laws. And among the Attic laws this was one: "Let it be a law among the Athenians for ever sacred and invio-

\* Xen. Memorab. lib. iv. c. 3. s. 16.

† Ibid. cap. 6. s. 2, 3, 4.

“ fable, always to render due homage in public towards the  
“ gods, and native heroes, according to the usual custom of  
“ the country, and with all possible sincerity to offer in pri-  
“ vate, first fruits with anniversary cakes.”\* And it was be-  
fore shown, that every citizen of Athens was obliged to take a  
solemn oath to conform to the religion of his country.

It is a great mistake to suppose, as some have done, that  
Socrates endeavoured to draw men off from the public reli-  
gion, or from the worship of the popular deities. Dacier, in  
his introduction to Socrates’ apology, says, that “ Socrates  
“ attacked the superstition of the Athenians, and the plurali-  
“ ty of their gods, by exposing the ridiculousness of the fa-  
“ bles, with which their theology was filled, and by that  
“ means endeavoured to bring them to the knowledge of the  
“ one true God.” And it is true, that Socrates disapproved  
the literal sense of some of the poetical fables, which raised  
a prejudice against him in the minds of the Athenians; yet  
he supposed those fables to contain a hidden and mysterious  
meaning,† and that the poets, as well as the diviners and de-  
liverers of oracles, were inspired by a divine afflatus. This  
appears from the passages produced above, chap. vi. to which  
I refer the reader. He never dissuaded the people from wor-  
shipping the gods appointed by the laws. The accusation  
brought against him by Anytus and Melitus was, that he did  
not believe those to be the gods which the city believed, and  
that he introduced other new gods. But against this charge  
Xenophon zealously vindicates him, by observing, that he  
openly sacrificed to the gods, frequently at home, and often  
at the public altars of the city.‡ And Socrates himself, in  
his apology to his judges, declares, that he wonders how  
Melitus came to know that he did not esteem them to be  
gods whom the city regarded as such, since many had seen  
him sacrificing on the common festivals, and at the public

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\* Potter’s Greek Antiq. vol. I. p. 136. 1st edit.

† See the learned M. Des Vaux’s life of Julian, vol. II. p. 282.

‡ Xen. Memor. lib i. cap. 1. s. 1, 3.



altars; and Melitus himself might have seen him if he had pleased.\* He appeals to Apollo's oracle in his own defence, of whom he speaks with great veneration. And in his prison he composed a hymn to Apollo, which he himself mentions in his last discourse to his friends on the day of his death.†

What hath been observed concerning Socrates, holds equally with respect to Plato. In the fourth book of his Republic he refers to Apollo at Delphi, as having made the most excellent constitutions in religious matters; and instances in those relating to temples, sacrifices, and the other rites observed in the worship of the gods, demons, and heroes,—and whatsoever things are necessary to propitiate them. And then adds, “these things we do not know, and in ordering “or administering the city, we will, if we be wise, obey no “other, nor use any other guide or instructor than the patron god, or the god of our country.” By which he means the Delphian Apollo, whom he had mentioned just before. “ἐδὲν ἄλλῃ πεισόμεθα ἢαν νῦν ἔχομεν, ἐδὲ χρησόμεθα ἐξηγητῇ ἄλλῃ ἢ τῷ “πατρίῳ (Θεῷ).”‡ And in his sixth book of Laws he saith, that “the laws concerning divine things were to be sought “for from Delphi, and that of these the priests were to be “the interpreters.”§ In his tenth book of Laws he blames those men as putting impious notions into the heads of young persons, who taught them that they ought not to look upon those to be gods, whom the law required them to regard as such. “ὡς ἐκ ὄντων Θεῶν οἷός ἐστι νόμος προσάττει.” And he represents it as the duty and office of a legislator, to punish those who do not believe the gods to be such as the law declares them to be.|| He there all along treats those persons as atheists, who did not acknowledge the gods appointed by law, and takes upon himself the defence of them. In his Epinomis, he supposes many of the gods and demons to have been

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\* Xen. Mem. p. 369. Edit. Sympson, 2da.

† Plato's Phædo Oper. p. 376. H. Edit. Fic. Lugd. 1590.

‡ Plato Oper. p. 448. B, C.

§ Ibid. 616. G.

|| Ibid. p. 666.

made known by dreams, prophecy, divination, voices heard by persons in health or in sickness, or even at the hour of their departure; and that these things have given rise to the institution of many religious rites observed both privately and publicly; and he would not have any of the rites founded upon them to be neglected or altered. He adds, that a legislator who hath the least share of understanding will not make the most minute alteration in any of these things, or endeavour to turn his city to a less certain way of worship; and he will not attempt to innovate in any thing relating to the sacrifices prescribed by the laws of the country.\* This may help us to judge of the truth of Dacier's assertion in his discourse on Plato, and which he repeats in his life, that "Plato endeavours to re-establish natural religion, by opposing Paganism which was the corruption of it; and that in order to cure men of superstition and idolatry, which then reigned so much in the world, Plato forgets nothing which might induce them to render God a rational worship."†

All the other philosophers without exception concurred in the same sentiments, that every nation should worship the

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\* Plato Oper. p. 702. E.

† Ficinus, who was both a great admirer of that philosopher and thoroughly versed in his writings, says, that "Plato, in imitation of the more ancient theologists, and all the Platonists, received the history of oracles as true, and endeavoured to support it by arguments: that both in his *Phædrus* and *Timæus* he shows great faith in them. In his *Phædrus* he counts all human wisdom to be as nothing in comparison of that which is obtained from oracles and divine madness. And in his *Timæus* he says, that with relation to divine matters, a philosopher ought not to affirm any thing but in as far as it is agreeable to, and confirmed by the divine oracles." Ficinus adds, that there are many things in Plato of this kind. "Profectò et ipse Plato antiquiores theologos imitatus, et Platonici omnes, oraculorum historiam ubique tanquam veram accipiunt, rationibusque confirmant. Mitto quantam his in *Phædro* adhibeat fidem: quantam et in *Timæo*: in *Phædro* quidè humanam sapientiam præ illâ quæ ab oraculis furoribusque divinis habetur nihili pendens: in *Timæo* autem dicens eatenus a philosopho de rebus divinis affirmandum esse quatenus divinis oraculis confirmetur. Mitto quàm plurima apud Platonem similia." Ficin. Argument. in apologiam Socratis. Plat. Oper. p. 797. E. F. Edit. Lugd. 1590.

gods according to the established laws and customs, to which also every private person ought in his own practice to conform. The first precept in the golden verses of Pythagoras, which, though not composed by himself, are allowed to contain a summary of the Pythagoric doctrine, is this: "That men should in the first place worship the immortal gods, as they are appointed by the law.—"

"Ἀθανάτους μὲν πρῶτα θεὸς νόμος ὡς διάνυσται  
"τίμα."

Where it may be observed, that there is not the least mention made of worshipping the one supreme God. Cicero expresseth the sense of all the Pagan philosophers as well as legislators, when he saith, "Majorum instituta tueri sacris caeremoniisque retinendis sapientis est."\* That it is the part or duty of a wise man to maintain the institutions of our ancestors, and to retain the sacred rites and ceremonies. Cotta in Cicero's third book, *De Naturâ Deorum*, though he takes great liberties in exposing some of the fables concerning the gods, yet speaking of the opinions which they had received from their ancestors, relating to the immortal gods and their religious rites and ceremonies, declares that he always had defended them, and always would; and that no man's discourse, whether learned or unlearned, should ever move him to forsake the opinion derived from their ancestors concerning the worship of the gods. "Ego verò eas semper defendam, semperque defendi: nec me ex ea opinione quam a majoribus accepi, de cultu deorum immortalium ullius unquam oratio, aut docti, aut indocti, movebit."† The excellent Epictetus represents it as a duty incumbent upon every one, to offer up libations and sacrifices and first fruits according to the customs or rites of his country, κατὰ τὰ πάτρια.‡ Plutarch has several passages to the same purpose; and he

\* *De Divinat. lib. ii. cap. 72. p. 295. Edit. Davis.*

† *De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 2. p. 260.*

‡ *Epict. Enchir. cap. 31. Edit. Upton.*

himself was initiated in the sacred rites at Delphi, and was a priest of Apollo. And to add no more, that great and good emperor and philosopher Marcus Antoninus, was remarkably strict in the worship of the gods, and in the observation of the sacred ceremonies. In a time of public calamity when the plague raged in Italy, and the war broke out with the Quadi and Marcomanni, he endeavoured to appease the gods by a great variety of sacrifices; and was no less liberal in his thanksgivings to them, when he met with victory and success. This occasioned that jest upon him, which Ammianus Marcellinus informs us was handed down to his time. "The white oxen to Marcus Cæsar, if thou conquerest we perish."\*

Not only did the philosophers urge the people to conform to the religion already established by the laws of their respective countries, but when they took upon them the character of legislators, and gave plans of such laws and constitutions, as appeared to them most agreeable to reason, and to be most for the benefit of mankind, with regard to religion as well as civil matters, they did not prescribe to the people the worship of the one true God, the Creator of the universe, or lay this as the basis of their religious constitutions, as the lawgivers of the Hebrews did; but the whole scheme of the laws and religion they proposed, turned upon a multiplicity of deities. The most celebrated of the philosophical speculative legislators was Plato. But whatever notions he himself had of the supreme Being, the first Principle and Cause of all things, he did not propose him to the people as the object of their public worship, and of the popular adoration and devotions, because what he is, and how he is to be worshipped, is not to be described or declared. He begins his eighth book of *Laws* with observing that, as to what relates to religion, and to the solemn festivals, what sacrifices it would be best and properest for the city to offer, and to what gods they should

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\* Ammian. Marcell. lib. xxv. p. 427. Paris, 1681.

be offered, this ought to be regulated with the advice of the Delphian oracle. He himself there proposes twelve sacred festivals to be solemnized, one in each month, to the twelve deities from whom the several tribes should be denominated. He speaks also of the solemnities of the celestial and terrestrial gods. He frequently asserts the divinity of the stars. At the latter end of his seventh book of *Laws*, he calls the sun and moon the great gods; and in his *Epinomis* he says, "one of these two things must be allowed: either we must say, and that most rightly, that the stars are gods, or else that they are the images, or as it were the statues of the gods, formed and fashioned by the gods themselves."\* And soon after he calls them "the first and greatest visible gods, who are most to be honoured, and who with a most acute sight behold all things." And he pronounces that, "those ought to be accounted very bad men, who do not openly declare to the people, those gods which are manifest to our eyes" (by which he understands the stars, whom a little before he had called the greatest visible gods) "or who suffer them to be neglected, and left without sacrifices, and the honours which are due to them." And therefore he directs that sacrifices should be offered, and solemn days celebrated to their honour.†

Steuchus Eugubinus, who was very well acquainted with Plato's philosophy, and had a high esteem for it, observes, that Plato hath said nothing about the supreme Deity in his book of *Laws*, as being not to be known or described either as to name or nature, nor hath he set down any thing about

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\* It is to be observed that he does not call them the images of God, as some have represented his sense, but the images of the gods, that is, of the gods that inhabit or animate them, and who fabricated them for themselves. And I think Ficinus' observation a just one, that Plato calls the souls of the stars gods, and their bodies the images of the gods. "Appellat animas stellarum deos, eorum verò corpora deorum simulacra." Argum. in *Epin.* See *Plat. Oper. Ficin.* p. 701. H. et p. 845. Lugd. 1590.

† *Ibid.* p. 702. F.

his worship: that he thought it not lawful to publish to the vulgar the Parent of the universe. For not understanding the things that are said of him, they would be apt to deride them, as being things remote from popular custom, and from their gross conceptions: that therefore treating of laws which ought to be published to the people, he speaks nothing of this great unsearchable Divinity, and proposeth only the worship of heaven to the people, to whom he must speak only of that which they esteemed certain religion.\* It is probable that when Eugubinus mentions Plato as proposing the worship of heaven to the people, he not only refers to his frequently recommending the worship of the heavenly bodies, but has in view that passage in his *Epinomis*, where he mentions heaven as the supreme God, the author of all good things, whom men as well as all the other gods should worship and adore. A man may call it, says he, either the world, or Olympus, or heaven, provided he considers its various operations, that it makes the stars revolve in their several courses, and causes the differences of times and seasons, and provides proper aliment for all animals.† Ficinus, than whom no man was better acquainted with the works of Plato, and who carried his admiration of him to a degree of enthusiasm, puts the question, Why Plato openly asserts only the celestial gods, viz. the heavenly bodies? To which he answers, That it was “because the contemplation of the higher deities is altogether  
 “foreign to the matter of laws; and by mentioning the celestial gods, which are moved and employed in their  
 “several proper offices, he sufficiently intimates, that a higher god is to be sought after, who being himself unmoved  
 “moves them all, and as their common leader assigns each of  
 “them their respective functions.—*Quoniam superiorum contemplatio est a legum materiâ admodum aliena, et per cœlestes deos qui moventur, et propriis mancipantur officiis, satis admonet superiorem esse quærendum, qui et immotus*

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\* Steuch. *Eugub. de perenni Philosophia*, lib. v. cap. 3.

† Plat. *Oper. ubi supra*, p. 699.

“ ipse moveat omnia et communis dux propria singulis assignat officia.”\* But since Plato meddles with religion in his laws, and sets himself to prove the existence and providence of the gods against the atheists; and since he thought fit to give directions to the people as to the gods they were to worship; he ought certainly to have clearly directed them to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one supreme God, and to have insisted principally upon this as of the highest importance. And his taking so little notice of this, and yet so strongly recommending the worship of other deities, especially of the heavenly bodies, and at the same time declaring against any alteration of the laws and customs relating to religion, and the worship of the gods, shows that little was to be hoped for from him for reforming the popular superstition and idolatry. He rather established and confirmed it.†

In like manner Cicero in his excellent treatise of laws, which contains, according to Dr. Middleton,‡ a just account of his sentiments, and where he appears in the character both of a philosopher and lawgiver, gives no law relating to the worship of the one supreme God, but expressly prescribes the worship of a plurality of deities; both of those who were always accounted celestial; by which he refers to the gods who were called *Dii consentes et selecti*, and *Dii majorum gentium*; and of those whose merits had placed them in hea-

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\* See Ficinus' argument on Plato's tenth book of Laws. Plat. Oper. p. 841. F.

† Origen seems to have had Plato particularly in view when he finds fault with those who, notwithstanding their sublime speculations concerning the ineffable first Good, joined in the common idolatry; and he applies to them that of St. Paul, Rom. i. 21. that “when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations or reasonings.” Cont. Cels. lib. vi. p. 276, 277. edit. Spenser. And elsewhere he observes, concerning those who were puffed up with the knowledge they had learned from philosophy, that they frequented the temples and statues of the gods, and the mysteries, no less than the most illiterate of the vulgar, and led others to do so: and that they were not ashamed to address themselves to inanimate things as gods, or the images of the gods: in which the most simple Christian acted better than they. Ibid. lib. vii. p. 362.

‡ Middleton's Life of Cicero, vol. II. p. 623. edit. Dublin.

ven; such as Hercules, Liber, Æsculapius, Castor and Pollux, and Quirinus: as also of the household gods: and binds it as a duty upon the people in these things to follow the religion of their ancestors.\*

It sufficiently appeareth from the observations which have been made, how little was to be expected from the greatest and best philosophers for leading the people into the right knowledge and worship of the one true supreme God, and recovering them from the idolatry and polytheism in which they were involved.

What has been observed relates principally to the philosophers of Greece and Rome. But it may not be improper here to add something concerning the famous Chinese philosopher Confucius. It appears from the accounts given us of his life and writings by the learned authors of Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive Scientia Sinensis Latine Exposita, and who seems to be very much prejudiced in his favour, that he was a great upholder of the ancient superstitions, and would not suffer the least deviation from them. He blames those who did not worship according to the accustomed rites, but were ambitious to sacrifice to a higher kind of spirits than their condition allowed. For, according to the Chinese laws, none but the emperor was to offer sacrifices, with solemn rites, to heaven, and to the earth. The tributary kings and princes, who were next in dignity to the emperor, were allowed to sacrifice to the mountains and rivers, or to their spirits: the inferior governors to inferior things; and so on: every one was to offer sacrifices according to the rank of the offerer, and of the spirits to which he sacrificed. Confucius was for having this order strictly observed:† from whence it is evident, that he seems to have considered religion chiefly in a political view. By heaven the followers of Confucius, of the learned sect, generally understand the visible material heaven,

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\* Cic. de Leg. lib. ii. cap. 8. p. 100. Edit. Davis. 2do.

† Scient. Sin. lib. iii. part 1. p. 21. et part 2. p. 3, 4.



and by the spirit of heaven, its physical virtue and efficacy, void of intelligence. Thus Confucius' nephew, Cu Su, seems to have understood it, as appears from a passage in the book *Chùn Yùn*.\* But let us suppose, that Confucius himself by heaven and the spirit of heaven understood the one supreme God, the sacrificing to him seems not to be a religion he designed for the people, but to be reserved for the emperor himself, and forbidden to inferior persons; who were only allowed to worship those things of nature, and the spirits of them, which were supposed to be of inferior dignity. And by the spirits of the things, according to the Chinese philosophy, are to be understood their operative virtues, which are only the finest parts of the things themselves. This is plainly proved by F. Longobardi, whom I have before cited. And the learned Jesuits who published the *Scientia Sinensis*, own, that Confucius supposes the spirits to be intimately united to the things of nature, and that they cannot be separated from them.†

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\* *Scient. Sin. lib. ii. p. 87.*

† *Ibid. p. 51.*

## CHAP. XVI.

*Farther proofs of the philosophers, countenancing and encouraging the popular idolatry and polytheism. They employed their learning and abilities to defend and justify it. The worship of inferior deities was recommended by them under pretence that it tended to the honour of the Supreme. Some of the most eminent endeavoured to colour over the absurd part of the Pagan poetic theology by allegorizing the most indecent fables. They even apologized for the Egyptian animal worship, which the generality of the vulgar Pagans in other nations ridiculed. Their plea for idolatry and image worship as necessary to keep the people from falling into irreligion and atheism. Some of the most refined philosophers were against any external worship of the supreme God.*

So far were the philosophers from taking proper methods to recover the people from the common idolatry and polytheism, that they employed their learning and abilities to uphold the popular idolatry, and to find out the most plausible colours for justifying and recommending it.

It is an observation which has been often made, that after Christianity appeared to bless the world with its salutary light, the philosophers were the principal supporters of declining Paganism. They put on an appearance of extraordinary piety, and professed to look upon the things of nature with religious eyes, so as to behold God in them. They alleged that the whole world is to be regarded as a sacred thing, as being nothing but God himself displayed in his works: that men's devotions, therefore, were not to be huddled up in one general acknowledgment of a supreme invisible Being, the Maker and Governor of this vast universe, but that all the several powers, and virtues, and manifestations of the Deity in the world, considered singly and apart by themselves, should be called by several distinct names, and made so many distinct objects of their veneration: and therefore they spoke of the things of nature, and parts of the world, as so many distinct gods and goddesses. Thus it is that the very learned Dr. Cudworth, who was far from being prejudiced against them, re-

presents their sentiments.\* By such pretences as these they endeavoured to put a fair gloss upon the most stupid idolatry, even when, through the prevailing light of the Gospel, many of the vulgar came to be sensible of the absurdity of it.†

None of the Pagan philosophers were thought to have sublimer notions of the Divinity, than the Platonists and Pythagoreans, those of them especially who lived after the Christian revelation was published to the world, yet none were more strenuous assertors of the worship of inferior deities. And indeed the whole scheme and system of that philosophy tended to support and encourage it. They held that the supreme Being is so far above us, as not to be approached even in thought : and that the highest class of gods next to the Supreme are so far removed from us, that there is no immediate communication between them and mankind : but that there are vast numbers of intermediate powers dwelling in the airy regions between the highest æther and our earth, by whom our desires and prayers are carried up to the gods, and to whom the management of things here below is committed ; and that to them religious worship is to be paid. It is evident that these principles of Plato's school were favourable to the Pagan polytheism.‡ They even represented the worshipping inferior deities as an honour done to the Supreme ; and found fault with those who were for paying their adorations to the one supreme God, and to him only. "The great king "of the universe," says that eminent philosopher, Plotinus, "shows his greatness chiefly by the multitude of gods. For "this is not the part of those who know the power of God to "contract the Divinity into one, τὸ συστῆλαι εἰς ἓν, but to ex-

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\* Intel. Syst. p. 228.

† Julian Orat. iv. cited by Cudworth. Intel. Syst. p. 515. See also the Epistle of Maximus Madaurensis, a noted Pagan philosopher, to St. Austin. Apud Augustin. Opera, tom. II. epist. 16.

‡ The Indian Bramins in Malabar have the same notions, which they make use of to justify the worship paid by them to a vast number of inferior deities. See Narrative of the Danish Missionaries, part. 2d. p. 7. et seq.

“pand or display it as he himself hath expanded it ; who, remaining, what he is, one, maketh many, all of whom depend upon him, and are by him, and from him.”\* And Onatus, the Pythagorean, in a passage preserved by Stobæus, asserts, that “there is not one only God, but one the greatest and highest God : and that there are many other gods, differing in power, but he reigneth over them all, as surpassing them all in power, reason, and virtue.” He adds, that “those who maintain that there is only one God, are much mistaken : for they do not consider that the greatest dignity of the divine super-eminence consists in ruling and governing those who are like him, and in his being more excellent than others, and superior to them.”† Thus ingenious have men been to devise plausible pretences for paying divine honours to the creatures. But how much nobler is the Scripture doctrine : which teaches us, that there are numberless myriads of holy and mighty angels, subject to the Supreme, but that we are not to adore them, but to join with them in adoring their and our supreme universal Lord. Maximus Tyrius, in the conclusion of his first dissertation, expresseth himself thus, “If you are too weak to contemplate the Father and Maker of all things, it is sufficient for you at present to behold the works, and to worship his progeny (*τὰ ἐκγονα*, the things which proceed from him) which are many, and of various kinds ; not merely as many as the Bœotian poet mentions ; for there are not only thirty thousand gods, the sons and friends of God, but their number is not to be comprehended : and such in the heaven are the stars, in the æther demons.”‡ Thus were the objects of worship mul-

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\* Enead. II. lib. ix. cap. 9.

† Apud Stob. Eclog. Physic. lib. i. cap. 3. p. 4. edit. Plant. Onatus seems to intimate that there were some in his time who held that there is only one God : where he either refers to the Jews, or to some among the Gentiles who joined with them in this. But whoever they were, he plainly charges it as an error ; and in this he speaks the sense of the most eminent philosophers.

‡ Max. Tyr. Dissert. 1. p. 18. Edit. Oxon. 1677.

multiplied by the philosophers themselves to an amazing degree;\* whilst, at the same time, under pretence of the most exalted notions of the supreme Being, they declined speaking of him, or of the worship due to him, to the people. They alleged that the vulgar were unable to form any conception of an invisible Deity, and looked upon that to be nothing which they could not see or perceive by their senses; that, therefore, the worshipping the things of nature and the inferior deities, was the only way to keep the people from running into Atheism. On the same foundation they pleaded for and recommended the worship of images. Thus Maximus Tyrius, in a dissertation on this very subject, says, that "the divine nature stands not in need of images or statues; but that the nature and condition of man being very weak, and as far distant from the Divinity as heaven is from the earth, framed these signs for itself, and attributed to them the names and titles of the gods;" and he thinks the legislators acted wisely in contriving images for the people.† He especially approves the making images of the gods in human forms; but he also justifies the worshipping rivers, mountains, and other parts of nature, as the signs and representations of the Divinity.

I would observe, by the way, that Moses and the prophets under the Old Testament, as well as our Saviour and his apostles under the New, acted upon far nobler principles. They did not pretend a necessity for leading the people into wrong

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\* The philosophers not only joined with the popular Pagans in deifying and worshipping sensible objects, the things of this visible world, but the most refined of them, the Platonists, added a vast number of deities of their own imagining, and which belonged to the world of ideas, the intelligible and archetypal world, of which this sensible world is only the shadow and image, as Plotinus calls it. *Ennead. III. lib. viii. cap. 10.* It was their humour to deify the abstract notions of their own minds, and to make them divine powers, intelligences, and substantial essences. The latter Platonists, especially, who affected an extraordinary sublimity and refinement, carried this to a strange degree of extravagance. Any man will be convinced of this that considers the account which Proclus gives of these mystic and metaphysical deities, in the third and following books of his *Theologia Platonica*.

† Max. Tyr. *Dissert. 38. p. 452. Edit. Oxon. 1677.*

notions of religion, and into a worship unsuitable to the divine Majesty. Animated by a holy zeal for the glory of God, and assured of his divine assistance, they taught the people to worship an invisible Deity, in a pure and spiritual manner, without corporeal images and representations, and were not for dividing their religious homage between the great Lord of the universe, and his creatures and subjects, or parcelling out that worship to a multitude of pretended deities, which was due to him alone.

Another method which the philosophers took to uphold and justify the Pagan theology was, by allegorizing the fables of the poets and mythologists, which lay at the foundation of many of their sacred rites. I had occasion to take notice of this before, and observed, that the Stoics were particularly remarkable for their allegorical and physiological explications of those fables: though many of the Pagans themselves ridiculed the explications they gave, as forced and unnatural. This, however, was the way that was almost universally taken by the philosophers, after the Christians set themselves to expose the absurdities of the Pagan mythology, and the religion founded upon it. Instead of absolutely rejecting those fables, many of which were of an immoral tendency, and altogether unworthy of the Deity, the philosophers represented them as full of hidden wisdom, and thereby confirmed the people in the opinion they had of the divine original and authority of those fables, which was of the most pernicious consequence. Plotinus himself endeavoureth to accommodate the poetical fables and theogony to his own scheme of philosophy.\* And all the latter Platonists and Pythagoreans interpreted those fables in a physical sense, and applied them to the phenomena of nature. A remarkable instance of which we have in Porphyry's interpretation of Saturn's emasculating his father Coelus,† though this is one of the fables which Plato represents

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\* Plotin. Ennead. V. lib. viii. cap. 13. p. 554.

† Porphy. de Musarum Antro, p. 260, 261. in the Cambridge edition of Porphy. de Abstin.

as not fit to be tolerated in the commonwealth, whatever allegorical sense might be put upon it.

Even the Egyptian idolatry, in worshipping several kinds of animals, which was ridiculed for its absurdity, by many of the common Pagans in other countries, found advocates among the philosophers. Celsus observes, that the Egyptians looked upon the brute animals they worshipped to be a kind of symbols of God, *τίνα αὐτὰ θεῶν σύμβολα*, and that in the veneration they paid to those animals, they designed to honour the eternal ideas; and therefore blames the Christians for deriding them.\* And others of the philosophers, who pretended to an extraordinary refinement, endeavoured to persuade the world, that the Egyptian idolatry had a great deal of occult wisdom contained in it. That great philosopher Plotinus expresses a high esteem of the wisdom of the Egyptian priests, in representing divine mysteries under the figures of animals.† Porphry, after having given a great encomium of the piety, the abstinence, the purity, the continence, the philosophy of the Egyptian priests, and their unwearied diligence in their studies,‡ observes, that the divinity dwelleth not only in men, but in all animals: and that therefore they made the images of the gods in the figure of all animals, and sometimes joined the bodies of wild beasts and birds to the bodies of men :§

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\* Origen contra Cels. lib. iii. p. 121. For clearing this, it is proper to observe, that the Platonists speak of eternal ideas in God, as distinct beings, subsisting in and with the supreme God. And Plato himself, in his *Timæus*, represents them as *νοητὰ ζῶα*, intelligible animals, the patterns and prototypes of those that are sensible: and that they are immortal gods. He also teaches that those ideas are the only things derived from the supreme God, which have a real existence: and that all things in the world are only the images and representations of those ideas. See Campbell's *Necess. Revel.* p. 304, 305. Marg. note. Thus it appears, that their philosophy led to idolatry, and tended to furnish excuses even for the grossest kinds of it: since they might worship every thing in nature under pretence of doing honour to the eternal ideas, and divine originals, of which all things in this world are the representations.

† *Ennead.* lib. viii. cap. 6. p. 547.

‡ *De Abstin.* lib. iv. sec. 6. p. 149. edit. Cantab. 1655.

§ *Ibid.* sect. 9. p. 154.

that in some parts of Egypt the lion is worshipped, in others the wolf: and in every province they worshipped the virtues and the powers of the God who is over all, in those animals which were most proper to that province; so that each province had its several gods: that they worshipped all animals, and men too, in the village of Anubis: and that in their excellent wisdom and intimate communion with the Divinity, they came to know to which of the deities certain animals were dearer than men.\* And again he affirms, that it was through their wisdom and extraordinary knowledge of God and of divine things, that they came to the worship of animals: though he acknowledges that it might appear strange to the unlearned, that wise men, who were not carried away by the prejudices of the vulgar, and who had got above their ignorance, made those things the objects of their worship, which seemed not to be worthy of honour. Thus it is that Porphyry endeavours to justify the Egyptian worship of animals. But if we may depend upon the account given by Philostratus, the Egyptians were not able to assign any reasons to Apollonius Tyanæus of this their worship. The priests and wise men of Egypt (as hath been already observed) were very careful to conceal their theology from the people, under hieroglyphics or symbolical characters, and allegorical fables. And at length it came to pass, that the true original symbolical sense, being a secret transmitted but to few, was in a great measure lost and forgotten among those pretended wise men themselves. This sufficiently appears from Plutarch's book of Isis and Osiris, which plainly shows, that notwithstanding the high opinion that philosopher had entertained of the wisdom of the Egyptians, there was a great deal of darkness and confusion in their theology, which was full of monstrous fables, taken by the vulgar in the literal sense, and in the interpretation of which their learned men and priests were very much divided.

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\* De Abstin. lib. iv. sect. 9. p. 155. edit. Cantab.



The last thing I would here observe with regard to the philosophers is, that some of them who were thought to have the sublimest notions of the Divinity, seemed to be against all external worship of the supreme God. It was before shown, that Plato did not propose him to the people as the object of public worship, as being incomprehensible, and not to be named or expressed in words.\* Apollonius Tyaneus,

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\* The account Plato and the Platonists give of the first principle, who in their theology is the first and highest God, is perfectly unintelligible. They suppose him to be a simple unity, or unity itself; so simple, that, as Plotinus speaks, "nothing can be predicated of it, not being, nor essence, nor life, because it is "above all these things." Plotin. Ennead. III. lib. viii. cap. 9. He sets himself to show that the first principle, which he, after Plato, calls τὸ ἀγαθόν, is not intellect, because intellect implies multiplicity. Plotin. Ennead. III. lib. viii. cap. 7, 8. "When therefore," says he, "you speak of the ἀγαθόν, or good itself, you must add nothing to it even in thought.—You ought not to add to it intellect or "intelligence, lest you should add something alien from it, and so of one you "will make two, intellect and good.—παῖς δὲ τοῦ καὶ ἀγαθόν." Plotin. Ennead. III. lib. viii. cap. 10. Thus the first principle was not to have any thing predicated of it, nor consequently any attributes ascribed to it for fear of destroying its unity. Nor would they allow that the first transcendental unity, the τὸ ἓν, or ἀγαθόν, which is simply and absolutely one, had any thing properly to do either in the creation of the world, or the government of it. Numenius, a celebrated Platonic philosopher, in a passage quoted from him by Eusebius, gives it as Plato's doctrine, that "it was not fitting the first principle should [δημιουργῶν] act "as a demiurgus, or maker of the world." And he afterwards mentions it as a thing certain, and which admits of no doubt, that "the first God is idle or vacant from all works: but that the demiurgical god governs all things, going "through heaven.—Τὸν μὲν πρῶτον θεὸν ἀργὸν εἶναι ἔργων συμπάντων καὶ βασιλέα, "τὸν δημιουργικὸν δὲ θεὸν ἡγούμενον δι' αὐτοῦ ἵόντα." Euseb. Præp. Evangel. lib. xi. cap. 18. p. 537. B. C. edit. Paris, 1528. The same philosopher represents Plato as upbraiding men for being ignorant of the first God: for that he whom they regarded as the first, viz. the demiurgus, is not really the first, but there is another more ancient and more divine. Ibid. p. 359. C. It is upon this foundation, that the emperor Julian intimates that the Hebrews did not know the first God, because they supposed the maker of the world to be the first and highest God. Apud Cyril. contra Julian, lib. iv. p. 141, 142. D. This first Platonic principle, therefore, seems to be an abstract metaphysical deity, very different from the true supreme God as described to us in the sacred writings, whose understanding is infinite, who is the almighty Maker of heaven and earth, and who governeth all things by his wise and good providence. Nor none of these things could be properly predicated of the Platonic first god,

as appears by a passage cited by Eusebius, from a book of his upon sacrifices, was of opinion, that "no sensible thing was fit to be offered or dedicated to the God whom we call the first," and whom he afterwards describes to be the God over all: "there being no sensible thing which is not a kind of pollution compared with him: but that he ought to be worshipped by the word or reason which is inward, not that which proceedeth out of the mouth: and that we must ask good things from the best of Beings, by that which is best and most excellent in us; and this is intellect which does not need any organ or instrument of speech."\* To the same purpose Porphyry, who seems to have had this very passage of Apollonius in view, declares that, "as a certain wise man hath observed, we ought not to offer up, or dedicate any sensible thing to that God who is over all: for there is no material thing which is not impure to him who is abstracted from all matter: neither is any outward word proper to be offered to him which is uttered by the voice, nor even that which is internal, if it be polluted with any passion: but we must worship him in silence and pure thought."† Thus under pretence of inward religion and pure devotion, the outward expressions of it were to be neglected: and the only true God, who alone deserves to be worshipped, is not to have any outward homage rendered to him at all. This is certainly a false refinement, and which tendeth in a great measure to banish all appearance of religion, as it signifieth the worship of the one true supreme God, out of the world. It is however to be observed, that though some of the more refined Platonists and Pythagoreans declared against offering up any external material oblation or sacrifice to him whom they regarded as the first and highest

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whom they represent as eternally unactive, idle, as an Epicurean deity, having no concern with our world: nor is he therefore the proper object of our prayers and invocations, our thanksgivings and praises.

\* Euseb. *Præp. Evangel.* lib. iv. cap. 13. p. 150.

† Ibid. cap. 11. p. 149.

God, yet they recommended the observation of the public rites and ceremonies of religion, and the worship of the gods appointed by the laws, of which sacrifices and oblations made a principal part: a plain proof, that the Pagan public worship was not according to their notion of it, the worship of the one supreme God, but was wholly offered up to inferior deities, or to demons.

## CHAP. XVII.

*The state of the heathen world with respect to their notions of divine providence.*

*The belief of a providence superintending human affairs, obtained generally among the vulgar Pagans : but the providence they acknowledged was parcelled out among a multiplicity of gods and goddesses. Their notions of providence were also in other respects very imperfect and confused. The doctrine of the philosophers concerning providence considered. Many of them, and of the learned and polite Pagans, denied a providence. Of those who professed to acknowledge it, some confined it to heaven and heavenly things. Others supposed it to extend to the earth and to mankind, yet so as only to exercise a general care and superintendency, but not to extend to individuals. Others supposed all things, the least as well as the greatest, to be under the care of providence : but they ascribed this not to the supreme God, who they thought was above concerning himself with such things as these, and committed the care of them wholly to inferior deities. The great advantage of Revelation shown for instructing men in the doctrine of providence : and the noble idea given of it in the holy Scriptures.*

**N**EXT to the existence of God, that which is of the greatest importance to be known by us is, that he governs the world by his providence ; and particularly that he takes care of men and their affairs. Without a belief of providence there can be no such thing as religion. This the wisest of the heathens were sensible of. Cicero, in the beginning of his celebrated books of the nature of the gods, speaking of those philosophers who maintained that the gods take no care at all of mankind or their concerns, observes, that “ if their  
“ opinion were true, there would be no piety, no sanctity, no  
“ religion—that if the gods do not mind what men do, or  
“ what events befall them, there is no reason to pray to them,  
“ or worship them ; and that if religion and piety be taken  
“ away from amongst men, the greatest confusion and dis-  
“ order would ensue in human life : and together with piety,  
“ mutual fidelity, and the social ties which bind mankind to-  
“ gether, and that most excellent virtue, justice, would be ban-  
“ ished out of the world.—Sunt enim philosophi et fuerunt,  
“ qui omnino nullam habere censerent rerum humanarum  
“ procuracionem deos. Quorum si vera sententia est, quæ

“ potest esse pietas? quæ sanctitas? quæ religio?—quibus  
 “ sublatis, perturbatio vitæ sequitur, et magna confusio. At-  
 “ que haud scio, an pietate adversus deos sublatâ, fides etiam  
 “ et societas generis humani, et una excellentissima virtus jus-  
 “ titia tollatur.”\*

If we look back to the most ancient times, the doctrine of a providence seems to have been a remarkable part of the universal tradition derived from the first ages. Plutarch speaking of the Deity and a providence, “ ἡ πρόνοια καὶ τὸ Δίαι,” calls it “ the pious faith derived from their fathers or ancestors, from which they ought not to depart—τὴν εὐσεβῆ καὶ πατριῶν μὴ ποιεῖσθαι πίστιν.”† Some notion of this was still preserved amidst all the corruptions of the Pagan world. And to this was principally owing whatever there was of order, sobriety, and good government maintained among men. The ablest politicians were sensible of this, and therefore encouraged the belief of it among the people; and all the ancient legislators proceeded upon it as a principle, as is clearly shown by the learned Bishop of Gloucester, in his Divine Legation of Moses demonstrated. They who believed that there were superior invisible powers, generally believed also that they had a great influence on human affairs, and on the prosperous and adverse events which befall mankind. This is everywhere supposed in the writings of the poets, who usually represented things according to the popular notions, and were themselves the instructors of the people. Cicero in his Oration de Haruspic. Respons. n. 2. mentions it to the praise of the ancient Romans, that they excelled all nations in piety, and especially in this eminent point of wisdom, that they clearly perceived that all things are governed by the providence of the immortal gods.‡ And in his second book of

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\* De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 2.

† Plut. Oper. tom. II. p. 402. E. Francof.

‡ It is an observation of Lord Bolingbroke, that the belief of a particular providence was a principal cause of the prosperity of the Roman common-

Laws, cap. 7. he represents this doctrine as both true in itself, and of great advantage to the public, and that therefore care ought to be taken, that the citizens should, in the first place, have a firm persuasion of it fixed in their minds. I had occasion to quote both these passages before, and need not repeat them here.

But though the belief of a divine providence, as extending to mankind and their affairs, was generally propagated among the Pagans, and was no doubt of great advantage, yet as they fell from the right knowledge of the one true God, and became more and more immersed in idolatry and polytheism; so their notions of providence became wrong and confused too, and were debased with many corrupt mixtures. The providence they acknowledged was the providence of the divinities they adored. It was parcelled out among a multiplicity of gods and goddesses, among whom they supposed the administration of things to be distributed, as being “*συ-  
νάρχαι τῷ θεῷ*—co-rulers with God,” and “*κοινωνοὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς*” “—sharers with him in his empire,” as Maximus Tyrius expresseth it.\* They were regarded as having different provinces belonging to them: and many of the people, as Dr. Cudworth observes, looked upon them to be sovereign and independent in their several provinces. To them, therefore, both jointly and severally they offered up prayers and sacrifices, for obtaining the good things they stood in need of, and, for averting the evils and calamities they feared: whilst the one true God, the original Author of all good, and the supreme Disposer of all events, was overlooked and neglected.

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wealth: and that though the Roman religion established by Numa was very absurd, yet by keeping up an awe of superior power, and the belief of a providence that ordered the course of events, it produced all the marvellous effects which Machiavel, after Polybius, Cicero, and Plutarch, ascribes to it. Bolingbroke's Works, vol. IV. p. 421. edit. 4to. And when in the latter times of the Roman republic, they began to throw off all sense of religion, and regard to Divine Providence, their state declined, and they fell from their ancient virtue and glory.

\* Max. Tyr. Dissert. i. p. 5. et 19. Oxon. 1675.

Plato in his *Timæus* declares concerning the Pagans in his time, that "all those who had never so small a share of sobriety or prudence, were wont in the undertaking of any affair, whether small or great, always to invoke God.—Πάντες δὲ κατὰ ζῆλον σωφροσύνης μετέχουσι ἐπὶ πάσῃ ἔργῃ καὶ αἵματι καὶ μεγάλῃ πρᾶγματος θεὸν αἰεὶ πᾶ ἐπικαλεῖσθαι."\* A man that comes to read this, prepossessed with the notions he has received from Scripture, will be apt to understand it as signifying that the sober heathens were generally wont in every affair to invoke the one true God, and address themselves to him for his assistance and blessing. And it has been actually quoted by some learned men for this purpose. And indeed, separately taken, it has that appearance. But if we carefully examine it, we shall find that this is not the intention of that passage. It only signifies, that they were wont on such occasions to invoke a god, as it might properly be rendered, that is, some god or other, and probably the patron deity, *πατρὸς θεός*, as Plato sometimes expresses it, or some of the gods appointed by law.† This appears from what goes before and follows that passage. In the words immediately preceding Socrates tells *Timæus*, that he ought in the beginning of his discourse to invoke the gods according to law. To which *Timæus* answers, by observing in the passage now cited, that it was usual for all prudent persons in the beginning of every work to invoke God, or a God; "how much more," says he, "is it necessary for us, when we are about to discourse of the universe, whether it was made, or was without beginning, to invoke the gods and goddesses, that we may speak in a manner agreeable to them,

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\* Plat. Oper. p. 526. C. P. Lugd. 1590.

† Though the Pagans generally speak of the gods in the plural, yet it was not unusual with them to mention God in the singular number. Some of the ancient fathers and apologists for Christianity, particularly Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Lactantius, take notice of this, and of some forms of speech which obtained among the heathens of that time: such as, "Deus videt, Deus reddet, Deus inter nos judicabit, si Deus voluerit." "God seeth, God will recompense, God

“and consistent with ourselves.”\* To the same purpose Plato observes in the beginning of his eighth epistle; that “it is necessary in all things we think or say to begin from the gods—ἀπὸ θεῶν χρῆ πάντα ἀρχόμενον αἰεὶ λέγειν τε καὶ νοῦν.” And it is a precept of Socrates, mentioned by Xenophon in his *CEconomics*, that “we should endeavour to begin every work with the gods—πειρᾶσθαι σὺν τοῖς θεοῖς ἀρχεσθαι πάντος ἔργου.” Varro, as appears from a passage I mentioned before, thought he had done a considerable service to his countrymen and fellow citizens, in directing them what god or goddess they were to apply to in each particular case and circumstance.

That the vulgar Pagans, though they believed a providence, had wrong and defective notions of it, appears from a remarkable passage of Xenophon, in which he observes, that Socrates thought “that the gods take care of men, not “in the manner which οἱ πολλοί, the many, suppose,” (where he seems to speak of the generality of the Athenians themselves) “they think,” saith he, “that there are some things “which the gods know, and some things which they do “not know. But Socrates was of opinion that the gods “know all things, and are every where present.”† See the passage quoted above, p. 259.

The Pagans were also led into a wrong judgment of pro-

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“will judge between us, if God will;” and the like. This they regard as a kind of natural testimony to the unity and perfections of God; or in Tertullian’s language, “testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ.” But there is no great stress to be laid upon this. Dr. Cudworth himself owns, that the heathens sometimes used the word God indefinitely, and in a general way, when they had not the supreme God particularly in view. They also sometimes spoke of God in the singular, when they only intended to signify some one of the many deities they adored. The not attending to this, has sometimes led learned men astray in their quotations, who have judged of the meaning of passages in Pagan writers by their own Christian ideas. It may be added, that after the Gospel had made some progress in the world, and the Christians came to have frequent intercourse with the Pagans, such a manner of expression as hath been mentioned might be more frequently used, even among the vulgar Pagans, than it was before.

\* Plat. Oper. p. 526. C. Lugd. 1590.

† Memorab. Socrat. lib. i. cap. 1. sect. 19.



vidence by the notions they generally entertained of Fortune, which they regarded as a blind, capricious, inconstant deity, and as having a principal sway in the events of things in this lower world. This tended to take them off from that religious dependence upon God, and ingenuous trust in him, and that resignation to his disposing will, which is an eminent part of true religion and godliness. There is a remarkable passage of the Elder Pliny, which it may not be amiss to mention here. "Through the whole world," saith he, "in all places, and at all times, Fortune is universally invoked by all persons. This alone has the praise or blame of every thing, and is at the same time worshipped and reproached; esteemed by the most of mankind to be blind, uncertain, various, and inconstant, a favourer of such as are unworthy: to this all events are attributed both prosperous and adverse; and in the whole management of human affairs, this fills up both sides of the account.—To to quippe mundo, in locis omnibus, omnibusque horis, omnium vocibus, Fortuna sola invocatur, sola laudatur, sola arguitur, et cum conviciis colitur: volubilis à plerisque verò et cæca etiam existimata, vaga, inconstans, incerta, varia, indignorum faultrix: huic omnia expensa, huic omnia feruntur accepta, et in totâ ratione mortalium utramque partem facit."\* To the same purpose Sallust observes, that "Fortune rules in every thing.—Fortuna in omni re dominatur." And Menander says, that "Fortune is the king or tyrant of all the gods.—πάντων τύραννος ἡ τύχη ἐστὶν τῶν θεῶν."† Lord Herbert owns, that Fortune was held in great veneration among the Pagans, and looked upon by some of them as a deity. Both good and bad fortune, "bona et mala fortuna," were worshipped, and had images and altars. Various temples were erected to Fortune, both among the Greeks and Romans: and particularly there was a famous temple of Fortune at Præneste.‡

\* Plin. Hist. Nat. lib. ii. cap. 7.

† Apud Stob. Eclog. Physic. cap. 10. p. 15. Edit. Plantin.

‡ Herb. de Relig. Gentil. cap. 9. p. 80. et seq. 8vo. Amst. 1700.

Another thing to be observed with regard to the vulgar notions of providence among the heathens is, that they commonly considered it as extending only to the outward commodities of life; and therefore they applied to the gods for riches, health, prosperity, and success in their affairs, but not for wisdom, or virtue, or moral endowments. There is a famous passage to this purpose in Cicero's third book of the *Nature of the Gods*, which has been often taken notice of. Cotta is there introduced as saying, that "all men attributed the external commodities they enjoyed, their plenty of corn, wine, oil, and fruits, and every convenience and prosperous event of life, to the gods: but no man ever acknowledged his having received his virtue from God. For who," says he, "ever gives thanks to the gods for his being a good man? But for his being possessed of riches and honours, and preserved from dangers, he does. It is on the account of these things that they give Jupiter the appellation of *Optimus et Maximus*, the greatest and the best: not that he makes us just, temperate, wise, but that he gives us health, safety, and affluence." And he adds, that "this is the judgment of all mankind, that the gifts of fortune are to be asked of God, but that a man is to expect wisdom only from himself.\*—*Hæc quidem omnes mortales sic habent; externas commoditates, vineta, segetes, oliveta, ubertatem frugum et fructuum, omnem denique commoditatem prosperitatemque vitæ a diis se habere: virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam deo retulit.—Num quis quòd bonus vir esset gratias diis agit unquam? At quòd divis, quòd honoratus, quòd incolumis; Jovemque optimum et maximum ob eas res appellant: non quòd nos justos, temperatos, sapientes efficiat, sed quòd salvos, incolumes, opulentos, copiosos. Judicium hoc omnium mortalium est, fortunam a deo petendam, a seipso sumendam esse sapi-*

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\* *De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 36. p. 335, 336. edit. Davis. 2do.* The reader will observe here that he speaks of God in the singular number, and of gods in the plural, and makes use of one or other of these terms indifferently.

"entiam." This appears to me to be too universally expressed. There were, I doubt not, in the heathen world, persons that had a better way of thinking, as might be shown particularly with regard to Socrates, Plato, Epictetus, Antoninus, and even some of the poets. But if this had not been the notion generally entertained, both among those of the higher and lower rank, a man of such learning and eminence as Cotta, and who knew the world so well, would not have been introduced by Cicero as asserting it so positively and in such extensive terms. And it is agreeable to what our Saviour saith, when speaking of the commodities of this present life, he declares, that "after all these things do the Gentiles seek:" that is, they seek them in the first and chiefest place: in opposition to which he exhorteth his disciples, to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Mat. vi. 32, 33.

It may be farther observed in relation to the notions of providence which obtained among the Pagans, that not only did they invoke a great variety of those whom they looked upon as benevolent deities for assistance and direction, and for obtaining the good things they stood in need of; but they were also wont, on several occasions, to offer up prayers and sacrifices, and to render religious worship, to evil and malignant demons, regarded by themselves as such, from an apprehension that they had a great share in the administration of things, and in order to appease and humour them, and keep them from doing mischief: for the proof of this, I would refer the reader to what is said above, p. 118, et seq. And this certainly argueth very wrong notions of divine providence, as if God were not able or inclined to protect his faithful servants and true worshippers against the power and malice of evil beings.

Having considered the popular belief of providence among the heathens, let us next consider that of the philosophers. Many of them, instead of rectifying the vulgar notions on this head, would not allow that there is a providence at all. And in this as well as several other instances they erred

more than the common people. The doctrine of the Epicureans is well known, who, though they pretended to acknowledge that there are gods, absolutely denied that they concerned themselves about men, or any of their actions, or the events relating to them. But this was far from being peculiar to that sect. Plato, who lived before Epicurus, takes notice in his tenth book of *Laws*, of many in his time, who professed to believe the gods, and yet did not believe that they minded human affairs.

Cicero, in the introduction to his first book of the *Nature of the Gods*, represents this as one of the principal things which were controverted with great eagerness among the philosophers, and about which they differed mightily in their opinions, whether the gods are wholly idle and unactive, and take no care at all of the administration of things; or whether, on the contrary, all things were by them both made and constituted from the beginning, and are still moved and governed by them, and shall be so to infinite ages. “*Quod verò maxumè rem causamque continet; utrum nihil agant dii, nihil moliantur, et ab omni curatione et administratione rerum vacent: an contra ab his et a principio omnia facta et constituta sint, et ad infinitum semper regantur, atque moveantur, in primis magna dissensio est.*” And accordingly not only is Velleius the Epicurean there introduced as ridiculing the doctrine of divine providence; but Cotta the Academic employs all the force of his wit and eloquence against it, and sets himself to show that the gods take no care of men, and the actions and events relating to them. This opinion seems to have made no small progress in the polite world, even among the Romans. That ancient poet, Ennius, declares his belief, that there are gods, but that they take no notice of human actions, nor give themselves any concern about them: and what led him to this was the observing the calamities which befall good men, and the prosperity of the wicked.

“*Ego deum genus esse semper dixi, et dicam cœlitum:*  
VOL. I. Q q

" Sed eos non curare opinor, quid agat humanum genus ;

" Nam si curent, bene bonis sit malè malis; quod nunc abest."\*

That great man Tacitus having represented it " as uncertain in his judgment, whether human affairs were governed by fate and immutable necessity, or by chance," observes, that in this matter " the wisest of the ancients and their followers were of different sentiments : and that many had this opinion fixed in their minds, that neither our beginning nor our end, nor men at all, are minded by the gods.—*Mihi hæc ac talia audienti, in incerto iudicium est, fato ne res humanæ, ac necessitate immutabili, an forte volvantur: quippe sapientissimos, quique eorum sectam æmulantur diversos reperiæ, et multus insitam opinionem non initia nostra, non finem, non denique homines, diis curæ.*"† And that he himself was much inclined to that opinion appears from another passage, where speaking of the portents and presages in the reign of Nero, he says, these things happened so apparently without any interposition or direction from the gods, that Nero continued several years after both in his imperial rule, and in the perpetration of the most flagitious crimes.

Pliny, the great naturalist, lived about the same time with Tacitus, and he represents it as ridiculous to imagine, that the God who is supreme takes any care of human affairs: and adds, that without doubt the Divinity would be polluted with such a sad and troublesome ministry or employment. "*Irri-dendum verò agere curam rerum humanarum illud quicquid est summum. Anne tam triste et multiplici ministerio non pollui credamus dubitemusve?*" *Hist. Nat. lib. ii. cap. 7.*

Cæcilius, a learned and ingenious Roman lawyer, probably expresses the sense of many gentlemen among the Pagans of that time, when he urges it as an objection against the professors of Christianity, that they asserted a providence as ex-

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\* Apud. Cicero de Divinat. lib. ii. cap. 50. et de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 32.

† Tacit. *Annal. vi.*

tending to the affairs and actions of men, and even to their most secret thoughts. He represents it as an absurd thing in the Christians to believe, that "their God, whom they can neither see nor show, inspects diligently into the manners of all men, into their actions, and even their words and hidden thoughts: and that he is every where present, troublesome and impertinently busy and curious; since he interesteth himself in all things that are done, and thrusteth himself in to all places: whereas he can neither attend to every particular whilst he is employed about the whole, nor be able to take care of the whole, being busied about particulars.—*Christiani quæ monstra, quæ portenta confingunt? Deum illum suum, quem nec ostendere possunt nec videre, in omnium mores, omnium actus, verba etiam, et occultas cogitationes diligenter inquirere, discurrentem scilicet, atque ubique præsentem, molestum illum volunt, inquietum, impudentem curiosum: siquidem instet factis omnibus, locis omnibus interceptus, cum nec singulis inservire possit per universa districtus, nec universis sufficit, in singulis occupatus.*"\* This was the Epicurean way of talking against providence, as appears from what Velleius in Cicero says on that subject.† and which owes all its force to their measuring the Divinity by themselves, and supposing the gods to be limited, imperfect, and indolent beings.

As to those of the philosophers who asserted a providence, Epictetus represents them as of different sentiments concerning the nature and extent of it. Some of them, he says, admitted a providence in great and heavenly things, but in nothing upon earth.‡ Others supposed it to take care of things

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\* Min. Fel. p. 95. Edit var. 1672.

† De Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 20.

‡ This is said to have been Aristotle's opinion. It is true, that in his Nicomachian Ethics he seems to admit the supposition, that providence concerns itself about men and their affairs; though he speaks of it doubtfully. "If," says he, "the gods exercise any care at all about men, as it seems—*εἰ τίς ἐπιμέλεια τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπὸ θεῶν γίνεται, ὥς δοκεῖ.*" Arist. Oper. tom. II. p. 140. Paris 1629. But many of the ancients charge him with holding that providence does not ex-

both in heaven and earth; but only in general, not with respect to individuals. Others, like Ulysses in Homer, and Socrates, held that providence extendeth to individuals, and that not the least motion or action can be concealed from God.\* In this Socrates was followed by Plato, who, in his tenth book of *Laws*, endeavours to prove, that mankind, and the things relating to them, not only great matters, but even the smallest, are under the care of divine providence; and argues very well upon it. The same thing he asserts in his *Epinomis*; concerning which see above, p. 260. But, as was there observed, in his whole disputation on that subject he speaks of the providence of the gods in the plural, and even of the gods which the laws directed them to worship. And particularly he supposes, that the dominion and superintendency of things in this lower world was vested in the stars: whom therefore, both in his tenth book of *Laws* and in his *Epinomis*, he strongly recommendeth to the worship of the people. And he treats the doctrine of those who taught, that the sun, moon, and stars are not animated, and could not take cognizance of human affairs, as an inlet to Atheism, and a denial of providence.

It was not merely in a way of accommodation to the popular manner of expression, that Plato and others spoke of the

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tend to the things which are below the moon. Chalcidius positively asserts it in his commentary on Plato's *Timæus*, p. 369. at the end of Fabricius' edition of Hippolitus, Hamburg. 1716. A very learned writer asserts that this is a calumny that Chalcidius raised of him. But Plutarch, who lived before Chalcidius, plainly signifies the same thing. *De Placit. Philosoph. lib. ii. cap. 3.* So also does Clemens Alexand. *Strom. v. p. 700.* edit. Potter: and Potter in his *Notes* quotes other testimonies to the same purpose. Stobæus represents Aristotle as maintaining that heavenly things are governed by providence, but not things on earth. *Eclog. Physic. cap. 25. p. 48.* edit. Plant. Atticus the Platonist, as quoted by Eusebius, passes a severe censure upon him on this account, for subtracting men and their affairs from the care of divine providence. *Apud Euseb. Præparat. Evangel. lib. xv. cap. 5. p. 798. et seq.* and Proclus speaking of those physiologers, who, though they acknowledged the heavenly bodies to partake of mind and divinity, yet left the sublunary world to float up and down without providence, adds, that these afterwards Aristotle followed. See Cudworth's *Intel. Syst. p. 237.* 2d edit.

\* Epict. *Dissert. lib. i. cap. 12. init.*

providence of the gods. For the system of the Platonists, and others of the philosophers, who seemed to entertain the most exalted thoughts of the Divinity, was this: that he whom they regarded as the first and highest God did not concern himself with mankind or their affairs, but committed the administration and management of them wholly to inferior deities.\* It is not therefore without reason that Lord Bolingbroke observes, that “ the Pagans reduced the Monade or first “ Unity in some sort to an abstract or notional being, and “ banished him almost entirely out of the system of his “ works.”† Lord Herbert says, concerning the Pagans in general, that they exempted the highest God, as being most happy, from cares. “ Deum summum, tanquam beatissimum, “ curis eximebant olim Gentiles.”‡ And he elsewhere observes, that among those who believed one supreme God, many thought that he did not meddle with the things of this lower world ; but that he hath withdrawn himself with the super-celestial gods his companions from the view of mortals, as being of so sublime a nature, that no sharpness of sight or understanding could reach to them: instead of which he hath brought forth into view those celestial deities which we call the sun, moon, and heaven. Plutarch in his tract de Placit. Philosoph. argues pretty largely, that it is unworthy of the majesty of the supreme Being, and inconsistent with his happiness, to busy himself about the affairs of men.§ There is a

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\* It was observed before in the second chapter of this work, p. 72. marg. note, that this notion that the highest God of all is above concerning himself with the affairs of men, and hath devolved the care of them upon inferior deities, obtained among many of those Pagan nations, which retained the idea of one supreme God. And that this was a principal source of the prevailing polytheism, since it occasioned their offering up their worship, prayers, and sacrifices to inferior deities, on whom they thought they depended for all good things, whilst the supreme God, who, they imagined, did not concern himself about them, was neglected. To correct this error, and assert the universal and particular providence of the one supreme God, was one great design of the Jewish revelation, and is farther confirmed by the Gospel of our Saviour.

† Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. p. 468. edit. 4to.

‡ Relig. Gentil. cap. 11. p. 138.

§ De Placit. Philos. lib. i. cap. 7. tom. II. p. 881.



long and remarkable passage of Apuleius which it may be proper to take some notice of on this occasion: the purport of it is this, that the supreme God is so far above us, that he is scarce to be approached by the most purified human intellect: and that there is no immediate intercourse between us and the first class of subordinate deities visible or invisible: but the intercourse is carried on by intermediate powers called demons, who are appointed to take care of every thing here below, which it is not becoming the majesty of the celestial gods to meddle with.—“*Neque enim pro maiestate deum coelestium fuerit hæc curare.*”\* Porphyry also supposes that the highest God of all doth not concern himself with terrestrial and corporeal things: and that it belongeth to the inferior deities to grant us the good things necessary to this life, of which the first fruits are to be offered to them.† Yea, as was before observed, he supposes that evil demons had a power of bestowing riches, and other things relating to the body, which were usually accounted good; and that therefore it is necessary for those who would obtain these things, to conciliate their favour by prayers and sacrifices.

None of the philosophers were accounted more zealous assertors of divine providence as extending its care to mankind, than the Stoics. A remarkable specimen of this we have in what is largely urged to this purpose by Balbus the representative of the Stoic sect, in Cicero's second book of the Nature of the Gods. Yet he, as Plato had done before him, generally speaks of the gods in the plural; and the point he undertakes to prove is, that the world is administered by the providence of the gods; and in the course of his argument he lays a particular stress upon this, that the stars are animated, that they are living rational beings, and that they are gods. See some passages quoted to this purpose above, 250. which I need not here repeat. In like manner, Plutarch, in his tract against

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\* Apul. de *Dæmone Socratis*.

† Porphyr. de *Abstin.* lib. ii. sect. 34. et 37. p. 78. et 80. Cantab. 1655.

Colotes the Epicurean, reckons it among the things which are generally believed, and which he thinks are evident, and cannot reasonably be controverted, that "there is a providence of the gods, and that the sun and moon are animated, whom all men worship, and to whom they offer up prayers and sacrifices."\* Thus this great philosopher seems to put the doctrine of a providence, and that of the stars being animated and to be worshipped as gods, upon the same foundation, as if they were equally necessary to be believed, and there was the same evidence for the one as for the other. And this must certainly have had a bad effect: since those who could not think it reasonable to believe that the stars are living and intelligent beings, and exercise a care over men and their affairs, were in danger of being led to deny a providence; the proof of which, according to the reasoning of these philosophers, and even Plato himself, depended upon the same principles.

Balbus the Stoic, whom I have just now mentioned, after having said many excellent things to show the care which divine providence exerciseth towards the human race in general, proceeds to prove, that the welfare of individuals or particular persons is consulted and provided for by the immortal gods. "*Nec verò universo generi hominum solum, sed etiam singulis a diis immortalibus consuli et provideri solet.*"† But it appears from what he saith afterwards, that he does not intend by this to signify, that the care and interposition of divine providence extendeth to all individuals, but only to the more worthy and eminent, nor to all their concernments, but only to those of greater importance. Having instanced in several of the most eminently great and virtuous men among the ancient Romans, he adds, that both Greece and Rome had produced many extraordinary persons; none of whom became such but by the assistance of God, or of a God; as that phrase "*juvante Deo*" might

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\* Plut. Advers. Colot. Oper. tom II. p. 1123.

† De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 65. p. 254.

there be rendered. For he had spoken of the immortal gods just before: and he observes immediately after, that for this reason the poets, and especially Homer, assigned to their principal heroes certain gods to be their companions.\* He adds some farther proofs both that the gods take care of cities, and of particular persons, that is, of such extraordinary persons as those whom he had mentioned. And accordingly he declares, that no man ever became great without a divine afflatus or influence. "*Nemo igitur vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit.*"† But yet he thinks, that if a man's corn fields or vineyards should be hurt by a tempest, we ought not to suppose, that providence concerneth itself in such things as these. "For the gods," saith he, "take care of great matters, and neglect small ones.—*Magna dii curant, parva negligunt.*" Cotta, in his answer to Balbus, in his third book of the Nature of the Gods, takes notice of this doctrine of the Stoics, that the gods neglected small matters: and which they illustrated by this consideration, that kings do not mind little occurrences in their kingdoms. He answers, that if they knowingly pass them by and neglect them, it is a fault. But that the excuse of ignorance cannot be made for a god, nor want of power neither. He charges them with inconsistency, in pretending that the gods do not attend to all things, nor take care of the individuals of mankind, and yet that men ought to make prayers and vows to the gods, which supposes that the divine mind attends to particular persons and their affairs; since it is by particular persons that prayers and vows are made. "*Vota*

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\* De Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 66. p. 255.

† Ibid. p. 256. Dr. Cudworth produces this passage, "*juvante Deo,*" as a proof that Cicero uses the word god in the singular emphatically, and by way of eminency, to signify the one supreme God, the Lord of the universe, Intel. Syst. p. 256. But this passage, if taken in connexion with the context, does not prove it, but is an instance of what was observed before, that the Pagans sometimes used the word God in the singular, where it does not appear that they had the one supreme God particularly in view. See above, p. 300. marg. note.

“*suscipi dicitis oportere: nempe singuli vovent. Audit igitur mens divina etiam de singulis.*”\* This opinion of the Stoics, as represented by Balbus, is agreeable to that of Euripides, which is cited and approved by that great philosopher, Plutarch, that “God only concerns himself with the greatest things, and leaves the smaller to fortune.”† It does not appear, however, that the opinion expressed by Balbus was that of all the Stoics. For the famous Stoic, Chrysippus, is said to have maintained that providence extendeth its care to all things, the least and most inconsiderable not excepted: for which he is censured by Plutarch. And Epictetus and Antoninus appear to have been of the same sentiments, but Seneca seems not to be satisfied about it. There is a remarkable passage in his 95th epistle, in which he represents it as necessary to know “that the gods preside over the world: that they order things relating to the whole, as what properly belongs to them; and that they exercise a guardianship over the human race, and are sometimes curious about individuals.—*Scire illos esse qui præsent mun-do: qui universa, ut sua, temperant: qui humani generis tutelam gerunt: interdum curiosi singulorum.*” He seems here to think that providence seldom concerneth itself about individuals, or particular persons and things: especially those of smaller consequence. And if this were the case, the far greater part of mankind could not be sure that they and their concernments are under the care and inspection of divine providence: which would leave little room for a religious fear of God, and for the exercise of a due submission, resignation, and affiance.

The notions which many of the philosophers entertained of fate, did also contribute to encumber and perplex their doctrine of divine providence. It is mentioned as one of Thales’ sayings, that necessity is the strongest of all things;

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\* *De Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 36, et 39.*

† *Plut. de gerenda Repub. Oper. tom. II. p. 811.*

for all things are subject to it. Parmenides and Democritus held, as Plutarch informs us, that all things came by necessity: and Democritus understood this of an absolute material necessity. Heraclitus was of opinion that all things are done by fate, and that fate is the same with necessity.\* The Stoics especially talked much of fate. Zeno taught that all things are subject to fate, as we are informed by Laërtius. But the accounts given of fate by Zeno, Chrysippus, and the most eminent of the ancient Stoics, are very obscure and confused. They held that, in the constitution of the world, Jupiter himself was hampered by natural necessity, and the inobsequiousness of matter: so that he could not always do the things that he would. To this they ascribed it that some men are unavoidably of bad and perverse dispositions, and that good men are necessarily exposed to external evils and calamities. Plutarch says that necessity was, according to the Stoics, a violent and invincible or immoveable cause; and fate an orderly established complexion or concatenation of causes.† And yet they endeavoured so to explain it, as to leave room for human liberty. But it must be acknowledged that the later philosophers, after Christianity had made some progress in the world, particularly Hierocles and Simplicius, expressed themselves much more clearly and consistently on this subject.

The confusion and uncertainty which the philosophers were under, farther appears, in that they seemed to divide the ordering of events between God or providence, fate and fortune. Plato himself, according to Plutarch, referred some things to providence, some things to necessity.‡ And, in his fourth book of *Laws*, he saith that "God; and, with God, "fortune and opportunity, govern all the affairs of men."§ Maximus Tyrius supposes that all things which happen to

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\* Plutarch. de Placit. Phil. lib. i. cap. 25, 26, 27. Oper. tom. II. p. 884.

† Ibid. cap. 27. p. 885.

‡ Ibid. cap. 26. p. 884.

§ Plat. de Leg. lib. iv. p. 598. Oper. Lugd. 1590.

men are either inspected and ordered by providence, or necessitated by fate, or varied by fortune, or managed by human art and skill. He compares fate to a rigid tyrant, which neither acknowledgeth a superior, nor can be changed: that it draws us by force, and we must obey: that it is inexorable, and prayers to it are in vain: and that even Jupiter himself has no way of averting it. And accordingly he produces the passage of Homer, where Jupiter is introduced as complaining that the fates had determined that his dear son, Sarpedon, should be slain by Patroclus, and that therefore it was not in his power to save him. As to fortune, that philosopher represents it as a potentate that has no understanding, ἀνόητος δυνάστης, not guided by counsel, judgment, or providence, but by fury, passion, and impetuous arbitrary will: that it is without reason, without foresight, deaf, and inconstant, driven hither and thither, and not to be managed by any art or skill of a governor.\* And he had observed before, in the same dissertation, that riches, and what are usually called the goods of fortune, are not given by the gods, but are the mad gifts of mad fortune; and he compares them to the gifts we receive from persons that are drunk.†

It is manifest from the account which hath been given, that there was great confusion and uncertainty in the notions of the ancient Pagans, both the vulgar and the philosophers, with regard to divine providence: it must therefore be the highest satisfaction and advantage to have an express revelation from God to guide and instruct us in a matter of such vast importance. And this is our inestimable privilege, who have the benefit of the revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures. We are there assured, in the name of God himself, that though he is infinitely above all human comprehension, and though it be a wonderful condescension in him to regard the services of the most excellent of created beings, yet his pro-

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\* Max. Tyr. dissert. 30. p. 360, 362. et seq. edit. Oxon. 1677.

† Ibid. p. 357.

vidential care extendeth to all the creatures he hath made, and particularly to mankind: and not only to nations and large communities, but to the individuals of the human race, the meanest not excepted: that nothing befalleth us by a blind unguided chance, or an equally blind fatal necessity: that even those events which seem to us to be fortuitous are under the superintendency of God's most wise providence, and nothing, whether good or evil, happeneth to us without his direction or permission; but that this is so ordered as to leave room for the exercise of human liberty and moral agency, and for the operation of second causes and instruments: that there are orders of glorious beings, superior to man, whom God is pleased to make use of in the administrations of his providence towards the human race, but that things are not left absolutely to their direction and disposal: they are fellow-servants with us, of the same supreme universal Lord; nor is any part of that religious homage or adoration to be rendered to them which is due to him alone: that there are evil spirits, of great power as well as malice; but that they can do no more than God permits, and are under the sovereign control of his providence; so that good men need not be afraid of them, whilst they put their trust in God, and go on in the way of their duty; that God is just and good in all his dispensations, and always proceeds upon the wisest reasons, though we may not be able at present to apprehend those reasons: that to his goodness we owe all the advantages and accommodations of this present life; and that all the afflictions which befall us are permitted and ordered by him for wise and righteous ends; and that he will cause them to work together for good to them that love and serve him in sincerity. We are there farther assured, that God is ever ready to grant to good men the influences and aids of his Holy Spirit, to assist them in the performance of their duty, and to support and comfort them in all their tribulation: and, finally, that he exerciseth a constant inspection over all men, and knoweth all their words and

actions, and even the most secret thoughts and dispositions of their hearts, and that to him they must be accountable for them, and shall by him be rewarded or punished accordingly. This is the general idea which the Scripture giveth us of God's providential administration, than which nothing can be more noble, or more useful, where it is steadfastly believed. And it is of the highest advantage to have all this not merely proposed to us as the opinions of wise men and philosophers, contradicted by others of great name, but ascertained by an express revelation from God himself. This certainly layeth a solid foundation for a religious awe and veneration of the Divine Majesty, for yielding a dutiful obedience to his laws, for an entire submission and resignation to his will, and a calm acquiescence in the orders of his providence, for a thankful sense of his goodness in the blessings we enjoy, and a steady patience and fortitude of mind under all the afflictions and adversities we may meet with in this present state, and for our acting continually as in his sight, and maintaining an habitual regard to him in our whole course.

On this occasion it may not be improper to say something about the duty of prayer, the right exercise of which hath a manifest dependence on the doctrine and belief of divine providence. This hath very generally obtained, wherever there has been an appearance of religion; and it may reasonably be supposed to have made a part of the primitive religion derived from the first parents and ancestors of the human race. Whilst this religion continued in a considerable degree uncorrupted, prayers, as well as the other acts of divine worship, were directed to the one true God, the Creator and Governor of the world. But, as idolatry made a progress, their religious worship, and particularly this part of it, was addressed to a multiplicity of deities. To these they offered up their prayers and supplications, looking upon them as the dispensers of worldly blessings, or the inflictors of evils and calamities: whilst the supreme universal Lord was in a great measure neglected, even by those who had



some notion of the one supreme Deity, because they supposed him too far above them, to concern himself with their affairs. Hence it came to pass, that though prayer was almost universally in use among the Pagan nations, they were wrong in the object of their prayers, and generally in the matter of them too. They seem for the most part to have had no notion of praying to the gods for any thing but goods of a worldly nature, riches, honours, long life, health, prosperity and success in their undertakings, and other things of a like kind. Some of their wisest men saw the impropriety of this, and at the same time they were so sensible of their own inability to judge what to pray for as they ought, that they thought it best only to pray for good things in general, and not to presume to descend to particular requests. This is the design of Socrates, in the second Alcibiad; in which he represents to that young nobleman, that it was not safe for him to pray for any thing in particular, lest the thing he prayed for should prove a curse instead of a blessing; and therefore advises him to wait till some god should enlighten him in the knowledge of good and evil. Pythagoras, as Laërtius informs us,\* permitted not that any man should pray for himself, because no man knoweth what is good for him. Max. Tyrius has a whole dissertation to prove that we ought not to pray at all. And others of the philosophers were probably of the same opinion.† Some of them indeed,

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\* Laërt. lib. viii. segm. 9.

† Our modern deists, who profess to govern themselves by the law of nature, are divided in their sentiments about prayer. Some think it to be a duty of natural religion, others will not allow it to be so. Mr. Chubb is of opinion, that there is an impropriety in praying to God, and intimates his suspicion that it is displeasing to the Deity. See his *Posthumous Works*, vol. I. p. 283, et seq. Blount, in his notes on Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius Tyanæus*, p. 38. having observed that some of the heathens used no prayers at all, insinuates, in their names, several objections against that duty. Lord Bolingbroke seems sometimes to make it a duty of the law of nature, but is for confining it to the heart, and not for making use of outward expressions in prayer. The reader may see the arguments of Maximus Tyrius and others against the duty of prayer, well answered in Dr. Benson's tract, on the *End and Design of Prayer*.

and particularly Epictetus and Antoninus, had juster notions, both of the obligations of the duty of prayer, and of what should be the properest matter for our prayers: but as to the objects of prayer, they took no care to rectify the popular polytheistical notions, but rather countenanced them. But, if the philosophers had been ever so right, or so unanimous in their opinions and directions as to the duty of prayer, it must have had but small influence on the generality of mankind, in comparison of that which ariseth from the authority of an express and well attested revelation from God, enjoining it as our duty to pray to God, and encouraging us to it by gracious declarations and promises. Such a revelation we have communicated to us in the Holy Scriptures. We have the satisfaction of being there assured that though God be highly exalted above all blessing and praise, yet he alloweth and requireth us to offer up our praises and thanksgivings to his Divine Majesty for the benefits we receive from him, and our prayers and supplications for obtaining the good things we stand in need of, and for averting the evils we have reason to fear; not as if he did not know our wants without our expressing them, but because it is his will that we should maintain a constant sense of our absolute dependence upon God, and exercise a dutiful resignation and affiance, and all those pious affections which become reasonable creatures towards the supreme Being. We are allowed to come to him as on a throne of grace, in the name of Jesus Christ, the great and only Mediator of his own appointment, with a filial freedom, as children to a father both able and ready to help us; to apply to him even for the good things relating to the body and this present world: provided we ask them, not absolutely, but in an entire resignation to his will, and so far only as he seeth them to be really fit and needful for us: but especially to apply to him for blessings of a spiritual nature, and for his gracious assistances to support and animate us in the performance of our duty. In the Holy Scriptures we have the most excellent patterns of pray-

er, and the best directions for the right performance of it, and are taught both by precept and example what to pray for, and how to pray. But at the same time great care is taken to inform us, that our prayers will be of no avail to our acceptance with God, if separated from a holy and virtuous practice; that the prayer of the wicked man persisting in his wickedness is an abomination unto the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

## CHAP. XVIII.

*General reflections on the foregoing account of the religion of the ancient Pagans.*

*The first reflection is this: that the representations made to us in Scripture of the deplorable state of religion among the Gentiles are literally true, and agreeable to fact, and are confirmed by the undoubted monuments of Paganism. The attempts of some learned men to explain away those representations considered, and shown to be vain and insufficient.*

I SHALL conclude the account that has been given of the state of religion in the gentile world, with some general reflections and observations.

It plainly appears that even the most learned and civilized heathen nations were sunk into a deplorable state of darkness and corruption. They were fallen from the knowledge and worship of the one true God into the most amazing idolatry and polytheism. The names, the characters, and attributes of God were misapplied to a multiplicity of idol deities. Instead of being led by the works of God to acknowledge and adore him, the glorious Author, they for the most part worshipped the works themselves, and paid that adoration to them which was due to him alone. Temples were every where built, altars erected, prayers and sacrifices offered to false and fictitious deities, to many of whom the popular theology attributed some of the worst vices and passions of frail mortals. They even worshipped evil demons acknowledged by themselves to be such; and many of their religious rites, instituted by the command of their oracles, were so cruel, so obscene and impure, as were only suited to evil and vicious beings. Many of their philosophers themselves either maintained tenets which tended to atheism, and to subvert the foundations of all religion; or they endeavoured to destroy all certainty and evidence, and to introduce a universal doubt and scepticism, whereby they left men no principles to depend upon, even with regard to the belief of a God and a providence. And as to those of the philosophers who entertained juster and nobler sentiments of religion and the Deity, their sublime speculations, which we are so apt to admire, were mixed with very dangerous er-

rors, and at best were of small advantage to the people, and confined, in a great measure, to their schools. To which it must be added, that, in their own practice, they universally fell in with the common idolatry and polytheism, and instead of reclaiming the people from it, countenanced it by their maxims, and devised plausible colours to defend it.

The truth of this account has been shown at large from the heathen writers themselves, and is confirmed by all the remaining monuments of Paganism. And this fully justifies the representation that is made to us in the holy Scriptures of the state of religion in the heathen world, especially at the time when the Christian revelation was first published. St. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, describes the heathens in general, those especially of the Roman empire, which was then the most learned and civilized part of the world, as having arrived to the most monstrous degree of idolatry and corruption of manners: that notwithstanding the discoveries made of the divine nature and perfections in the works of creation, which left them "without excuse," they "did not glorify God as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools: and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." And that "they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever:" that as "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," so he gave "them up to a reprobate mind," so that they abandoned themselves to the most unnatural impurities, and to all kinds of abominable vice and wickedness. See Rom. i. 17. to the end of that chapter. St. Paul, in his other epistles, speaks in the same strain. Thus, in his first to the Thessalonians, he saith of the gentiles, that "they knew not God," 1 Thess. iv. 5. And he describes their conversion to Christianity thus, that they "turned from idols to serve the living and true God:" where he supposes that whilst they continued in their gentile state, they served idols, and did not

serve the living and true God, 1 Thess. i. 9. To the Galatians, who had been gentiles, he saith, “ then when ye knew “ not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no “ gods.” Gal. iv. 8. And, in like manner, in his epistle to the Ephesians, he bids them remember that they “ were in time “ past gentiles in the flesh :” and that at that time they “ had “ no hope, and were without God in the world,” Eph. ii. 11, 12. *ἀθεοὶ ἐν τῇ κτίσει*; not as if they had no notion at all of a Deity, and did not believe the existence of God, but it is a strong manner of expression to signify that they were without the right knowledge and worship of the only true God, and paid their religious service not to the true God, but to idol deities. And, in the fourth chapter of that epistle, verse 17, 18. he gives it as the character of the gentiles in general, that they had the “ understanding darkened, being alienated “ from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in “ them, because of the blindness of their hearts.” The same apostle tells the Corinthians that “ the things which the gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils, and not to God;” and says he, “ I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” 1 Cor. x. 20. If the word *δαμονίους* be rendered not *devils*, as it is by our translators, but *demons*, as some choose to render it, it makes no great difference. It is certain that the word *δαμόνιον* is generally taken in a bad sense in Scripture;\* and which way soever we render the word, it is plain that the apostle here opposeth the worship of these demons to the worship of the one true God, and supposeth that it was inconsistent with it, and that the one of these could not be safely joined with the other. In the several passages which have been produced, it is evident that the apostle speaks of the heathens in general. What particular persons there might be among them, who kept themselves free from the prevailing

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\* The learned Dr. Cudworth observes that, in the New Testament, according to the judgment of Origen, Eusebius, and others of the ancient fathers, both these words *δαίμονες* and *δαμόνια*, are alike taken always in a worse sense for evil and impure spirits only. Intel. Syst. p. 264.

corruption and idolatry, it is of little purpose to enquire whether it has been shown that their greatest and wisest men were tainted with it. When the apostle puts the supposition concerning "the uncircumcision," or uncircumcised gentiles, "keeping from righteousness of the law, or fulfilling the law," Rom. i. 27. this seems plainly to be understood of such gentiles as Cornelius was, who, though uncircumcised, and not of the commonwealth of Israel, was a devout adorer of the true God, and of him only. And indeed no man that was not so could be said to keep the law, or to fulfil it, of which this was a principal and fundamental article. And it is evidently of such persons as Cornelius that St. Peter speaks when he declares, "of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but, in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Acts x. 34, 35. And it may be justly concluded, that Cornelius learned the knowledge and worship of the one true God, by conversing with the Jews. Acts x. 22. And probably this was the case of many other gentiles at that time. But nothing can be concluded from this, as to the general state of the heathen world, with regard to religion.

I am sensible that some learned persons, and particularly the eminent Dr. Cudworth, have endeavoured to bring in St. Paul himself as a voucher, that the heathens in general, not only the philosophers, but the vulgar, knew and worshipped the one true God. And this they attempt to prove from that apostle's discourse to the Athenians. What our translators render, "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious," the Doctor renders "thus, I perceive that in every thing ye are more than ordinarily religious." And he thinks the word *δεισιδαιμονοίεστες* is to be taken there in a good sense. From St. Paul's saying, "the God whom you ignorantly worship, declare I unto you:" and afterwards mentioning the God that made the world and all things in it, the Doctor infers two things: "first, that by the unknown God of the Athenians was meant the only true God, he who made the world and all things in it, who in all pro-

“bability was therefore stiled by them ἀγνώστος θεός, because  
 “he is not only invisible, but incomprehensible by mor-  
 “tals.” The second thing which, he says, may be conclud-  
 ed from hence, is, that “the Athenian Pagans did εὐσεβείῳ, re-  
 “ligiously worship the true God, the Lord of heaven and  
 “earth.” And having taken notice of the passage which St.  
 Paul cites from Aratus concerning Ζεὺς, or Jupiter, that “we  
 “are his offspring,” he says, that “we have here a plain  
 “Scripture acknowledgment, that by the Ζεὺς of the Greekish  
 “Pagans was sometimes at least meant the true God.”\* It  
 may be observed that this learned writer expresses himself  
 here with some caution and reserve: and if he had carried it  
 no farther than to say, that by the word Ζεὺς, or Jupiter,  
 among the Pagans was sometimes meant the true God, and  
 that some persons among them might make use of that name  
 to signify the one supreme God, I should not have much  
 contested it with him. But the point the Doctor should have  
 proved is, that he whom the generality of the vulgar Pagans  
 worshipped, under the name of Jupiter, was the only true  
 God, and not an idol deity. And it would be a strange  
 thing if he could produce a Scripture acknowledgment for  
 this: yet this is what he afterwards attempts. “It is evi-  
 “dent,” saith he, “that by Aratus’ Ζεὺς, or Jupiter, was real-  
 “ly meant the supreme God, the maker of the whole world:  
 “which, confirmed also by St. Paul and the Scripture, ought  
 “to be a matter out of controversy among us. Neither is it  
 “reasonable to think that Aratus was singular in this; but  
 “that he spoke according to the received theology of the  
 “Greeks, and that not only amongst philosophers and learn-  
 “ed men, but even the vulgar also. And since the Latins  
 “had the very same notion of Jupiter that the Greeks had  
 “of Ζεὺς, it cannot be denied, but that they commonly by  
 “their Jupiter also understood the one supreme God, the  
 “Lord of heaven and earth.” Thus, according to this very

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\* Intel. Syst. p. 473, 474, 475.



learned writer, the received theology of the Pagans, both amongst the philosophers and the vulgar, was this, that by the Jupiter they adored they commonly understood the one true supreme God, the maker of the world, and Lord of heaven and earth. And this he asserts is so evident that it cannot be denied. I have a great respect for this excellent author; but if he had expressed himself more cautiously and modestly on this head, it would have been better. He seems here to have been carried away by his charitable prejudices in favour of the ancient Pagans. And I heartily wish there was good reason to believe that the account he gives of them and their religion is a just and true one. But the contrary may be plainly proved from the Pagan writers themselves, and from several passages in his own learned work. We are not to judge of the Pagan religion, and the popular received theology, by some detached passages of particular writers, but by the general scheme of their religious establishments; by which it appears, that Jupiter was really no more than the chief of the Pagan idol deities, of the same kind, though somewhat superior to the rest. I think, however, that whatever his own charity might incline him to suppose, he should not have put this upon us as confirmed by Scripture authority. He does not merely say, there might be some few among the Pagans who knew and worshipped the one true supreme God: but he makes this to have been the common notion and practice of the heathens in general, and that, under the name of Jupiter, they directed their worship to the one true God, the same whom we adore. I need not take pains to prove that this is not the idea given us of the heathens in the Old Testament.\* And as to the New, though Dr. Cud-

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\* Many passages might be mentioned to this purpose. But I shall only take notice of one. The "heathens," and "those that know not God and call not 'on his name,'" are used as synonymous expressions. Jer. x. 25. Psal. lxxix. 6. But I do not see how this could be truly applied to them, if the one true God was the chief object of their devotions, to whom they principally paid their worship, and offered up their prayers.

worth has endeavoured to avail himself of St. Paul's authority, whosoever carefully examines the passages above produced from this great apostle, will be apt to think that it is scarcely possible to reconcile the account he gives of the general state of the heathen world with the Doctor's hypothesis. Indeed what this learned man relies upon is not any express Scripture declaration, that the gentiles in general knew and worshipped the one true God, and that this was the Jupiter they adored; but inferences of his own, from some particular expressions of St. Paul, interpreted after his own way, in opposition to frequent and express declarations of that apostle. Thus, according to this learned writer, the Athenians are represented by St. Paul as "more than ordinarily religious," who devoutly worshipped the one true God, the Maker and Lord of heaven and earth. And if this was true concerning the Athenians, it might be justly said of the heathens in general, since it admits of clear proof that none of the gentiles were more deeply immersed in the common idolatry and superstition than they were. Accordingly the Doctor supposes the same thing concerning the heathens in general, that the one true God was the *Zeús*, or Jupiter, they commonly adored, not the philosophers only, but the vulgar, both among the Greeks and Romans; and he would have us think that St. Paul supposed it too.

It is scarce worth while to contest it, whether the words with which the apostle introduces his discourse to the Athenians had better be translated "superstitious," or "religious." If the word used in the original be sometimes taken in a good sense, it cannot be denied that it is often in the Pagan writers themselves used to signify an excessive superstition. And it may be looked upon, as an instance of St. Paul's prudence, that he chose a word which was very proper to signify that superstition to which they were so immoderately addicted, and at the same time was capable of a softer sense, that he might not too much irritate them in the beginning of his discourse. But it seems to me a strange supposition to imagine that St. Paul intended to commend the Athenians, as being "in every

"thing more than ordinarily religious," in the proper and laudable sense of the word; as if they were in his opinion to an uncommon degree devout adorers of the only true God, the Maker of heaven and earth. The contrary appears from the whole strain of his discourse, as well as from what the sacred historian had observed just before, viz. that while Paul waited at Athens, "his spirit was stirred within him, when he "saw the city" *κατιδῶλον*—full of idols, or, as it is well rendered, "wholly given to idolatry." Can there be a plainer proof, that they were not more than ordinarily religious, in the good sense of the word, but grossly and extravagantly idolatrous and superstitious? And this was indeed their true character. Pausanias observes that they worshipped the gods more than others, and exceeded all others in their diligence, "*εἰς τὰ θεῖα*," towards the gods, or in things relating to the gods.\* And Xenophon, in his account of the Athenian republic, says they had twice as many festivals as any other cities. And what kind of festivals they were the reader may find by consulting Potter's Antiquities of Greece, vol. I. from whence it appears, that they were for the most part founded on the poetical fables of the gods. So addicted were the Athenians to superstition, that they were ready to adopt the gods of other countries, and worshipped them as well as their own. Strabo observes that they received many foreign sacra, or religious rites, "*πόλλα τῶν ξενικῶν ἱερῶν παρεδεξαν*," insomuch that they were ridiculed for it by their own comic writers.† If, therefore, the apostle be supposed here to tell them that they were in every thing more than ordinarily religious, the meaning can only be, that they were uncommonly diligent in what they took to be religion: which they might be, and yet be strangers to true religion, and addicted to a false one. And accordingly he begins his discourse with saying that, as he "passed by, and beheld their devotions, *τὰ σεβάσματα*," which may signify either their sacred rites, or the objects of their

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\* Pausan. Attic. cap. 17. † Strabo, lib. x. p. 722. Amstel.

worship, he “found an altar with this inscription, to the unknown God:” that is, to a God whom, by their own acknowledgement, they did not know. The whole inscription, according to Œcumenius, ran thus: “To the gods of Asia, Europe, and Libya or Africa, to the unknown and strange god.—*Θεῷ ἀγνώστῳ καὶ ξένῳ.*” And it appears from Pausanias, that there were several altars at Athens to unknown gods. The same thing is testified by Philostratus. So superstitious were they, that they were afraid of omitting or neglecting to pay their worship to any deity known or unknown.\* I am sensible that Dr. Cudworth gives a different sense to the word “unknown god,” from what I have here supposed. He thinks all that the Athenians meant by it was that God was “invisible” and “incomprehensible.” There might be some pretence for this, if they had confined this title to one God only; but, as hath been already hinted, they had altars erected to the unknown gods. And certain it is, that this was not the sense in which St. Paul took it: for in that sense he was an unknown God to St. Paul as well as to the Athenians. He will always be to Christians as well as to heathens invisible and incomprehensible, not to be seen by the bodily eye, nor fully comprehended by the mind. But St. Paul plainly signifies that he knew him, though the Athenians did not, and therefore he came to instruct them in the knowledge of that God whom they did not know before. “The God whom you ignorantly worship,” or as the words might properly be rendered, “the God whom

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\* There were not only at Athens, but in many other parts of the heathen world, altars erected, and sacrifices offered to unknown deities, that they might take in all the gods, both those whose names they knew, and those whom they were ignorant of, or concerning whom they were uncertain who they were. St. Austin informs us, that Varo wrote a book concerning the “*Dii certi*,” and another concerning the “*Dii incerti*.” *De Civ. Dei. lib. vi. cap. 3. et lib. 7. cap. 17.* A learned author has collected many testimonies to show that there were altars to the unknown god or gods among many nations, the Grecians, Arcadians, Lydians, Celtiberians, Arabians, the people of Marseilles, &c. See *The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation only, not from Reason or Nature, p. 242. et seq.*

“being ignorant of, *ὁ ἀγνώστου*, you worship, him declare I unto you.”\* As if he had said, you have built an altar to a God, who, you confess, is unknown to you. But I know him, and am now ready, if you will attend to me, to publish and declare him to you. The God whom you do not know, and whom I come to declare, is the only true God, who made the world and all things that are therein, and is the only sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

According to Dr. Cudworth's way of representing it, St. Paul, by citing what Aratus says of Jupiter, intended to signify to the Athenians, that the god to whom they erected an altar as to an unknown deity, was that very Jupiter whom they all acknowledged as the chief of the deities they adored. But certainly they would never have characterized their Jupiter as an unknown and strange or foreign god: nor would the apostle have represented him to them under that notion. It seems plain, from the whole of his discourse, that he here supposeth concerning the Athenians what he elsewhere saith of the gentiles in general, that “they knew not” (the one true) “God.” The most natural interpretation, therefore, seems to be this, that the apostle, according to his accustomed zeal and prudence, takes advantage, from their having erected an altar to the strange and unknown god, which was really an effect of their superstition, to declare to them the one true God whom they were ignorant of before, and to raise their thoughts and views to the great Creator and Lord of the universe, as the only proper object of their adoration. With the same view he cites a passage from one of their own poets,† to show

\* The word here *καταγγίλλω* which properly signifies to publish things to those that did not know them before. It is the word made use of to signify the publishing the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles who before were ignorant of it.

† The scholiast upon Aratus supposes that he speaks of the *Ζεὺς φυσικός*, the Jupiter Physicus, or the air. Dr. Cudworth finds fault with this, and I think very justly, if the air be understood merely as an inanimate thing. But it is not improbable that Aratus might mean the ether, in the Pythagorean sense, which they held to be animated, and to be the cause of the formation and order of things, and to be universally diffused, of which they supposed the souls of men

that what the poet had said of Jupiter properly belonged to that only true God whom he came to declare to them, and to whom he taught them to offer up a pure and spiritual worship.

to be particles : or, which comes pretty much to the same thing, he might mean the soul of the world, in the Stoical sense. Nor is there any thing in that whole passage of Aratus, a part of which is cited by the apostle, but might be said agreeably to the Pythagorean and Stoical notions. But St. Paul was not concerned to inquire what were Aratus' particular sentiments concerning the Deity: it was enough for his purpose, that what the poet said was applicable to the one true God, however he intended it : or, if we should suppose Aratus himself to have intended by Jupiter to signify the one true supreme God, this would be far from proving that the Jupiter, whom the Athenians and the heathens in general adored, was the one true God : though the apostle might justly and prudently take advantage from it to lead the Athenians from their idolatry. There is a remarkable passage of Sophocles, cited by Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Clemens Alexandrinus, and others of the fathers, though it is not to be found in any of his works now extant. The purport of it is this : " There is in truth one, there " is one God, who formed the heaven, and the spacious earth, and the blue " swelling sea, and the boisterous wind."

*Εἰς ταῖς ἀληθείαισιν εἰς ἑστὶ θεὸς*

*"Ὅς οὐρανὸν ἔστηχε καὶ γαῖαν μακρὰν*

*Πόντον τε χαρπὸν αἶμα, καὶ ἀνέμων ὄϊον.*

And then he goes on to blame the folly of mortals, " who, erring in their hearts, " have for a consolation to them in their calamities, set up images of the gods " made of wood, or stone, or gold, or ivory, and when they have offered sacrifices " to them, and celebrated festivals to their honour, think they have acted piously." If we suppose these verses to be genuine, and that St. Paul had quoted them in his discourse to the Athenians, which on that supposition he might have done, could it be said, as it is by Dr. Cudworth with respect to Aratus, that " it is not " reasonable to think that Sophocles was singular in this, but that he spake according to the received theology of the Greeks, and that not only among the " philosophers and learned men, but even the vulgar also?" The contrary is evident: for what is here said is manifestly opposed to the received theology, and to the religion and worship then in use among the Athenians and other Greeks, and to which they were strongly addicted. Whence Sophocles had this knowledge, or how he came by it, we cannot pretend to determine. There were rays of light scattered here and there among the Pagans, which sometimes broke forth in bright flashes. It may well be supposed, that he, and some others of the Greeks, might have some acquaintance with the doctrine of the Jews, whose religion had made a progress in the Lesser Asia, with which Greece was nearly connected. But which way soever we suppose him to have come by it, he seems to carry it farther, if these verses may be depended upon, than even Socrates or Plato himself; neither of whom ventured to pass a censure, as Sophocles seems here to do, upon the way of worshipping the gods by images, sacrifices, and festivals to their honour, but rather expressed their approbation of them.

I have observed before, that it was no unusual thing among the Pagans to apply to their Jupiter, and the other deities they adored, the attributes and works, which are proper to the one true supreme God. And the apostle's design, in citing this passage of the poet, was not to persuade the Athenians that the Jupiter whom they ordinarily worshipped was the true God, but that the God he came to declare to them was the true supreme God, to whom alone those characters and epithets really belonged, which were wrongly applied to the Pagan Jupiter.

It confirms the sense we have given of St. Paul's discourse, that he here calls the past times of heathenism "the times of their ignorance," ver. 30. And in ver. 27. he speaks "of their seeking the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him." Where he seems to compare them to persons groping in the dark, or to blind men who seek their way by feeling with their hands. So Polybius, as cited by Scapula, uses the word "*ψηλαφέν*," which we properly render to "feel after him." And Grotius' note upon it is this: "Ostendit hæc phrasis rei difficultatem. Nam palpare aut cæcorum est, aut noctu incedentium."

It may help to illustrate this, that St. Paul, in his speech to the Lycaonians, who would have worshipped him and Barnabas as Jupiter and Mercurius, exhorts them "to turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are therein;" and who had not left himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling men's hearts with food and gladness." Acts xiv. 15, 16, 17. Where he calls the gods the heathens worshipped, particularly Jupiter and Mercury, "vanities," and plainly intimates that they did not worship the true God who created all things by his power, and governeth all things by his providence. The Jupiter whose priest would have offered sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas, was undoubtedly the popular Jupiter of the Pagans. And it is evident, the apostle was far from supposing, what some have pretended, that Jupiter and the other

■ heathen deities were only different names of the one true  
■ God ; and that the worship which was rendered to them was  
■ really and intentionally offered to the one supreme Being, the  
■ Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. It has been already  
observed, that this apostle declares, that “ the things which  
“ the gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils, or demons,  
“ and not to God.” 1 Cor. x. 20. where he plainly opposes  
the true God to the popular Pagan deities, which were the  
objects of public worship. But how could he say this con-  
sistently with truth, if the Jupiter to which they principally  
offered up their sacrifices was really the one true supreme  
God ; and Apollo, Bacchus, and the other Pagan divinities,  
were only so many different appellations given to the Maker  
and Lord of the universe ?

The last thing I shall observe here, as urged by those learn-  
ed writers who give the most favourable account of the state  
of religion in the Pagan world, relates to the passages produced  
from heathen authors, to show that all nations throughout the  
world acknowledged and worshipped the one supreme God,  
the sovereign Lord and Governor of the universe. That an  
obscure notion of one supreme Being obtained among many  
of the heathen nations, even among those that were accounted  
the most barbarous, who had it from ancient tradition, has been  
shown in the second chapter of this work. But it has also been  
shown that some of them did not render any worship to him  
whom they regarded as supreme, from a notion that he was  
too far above them, and that he did not concern himself with  
them or their affairs, and therefore they paid their worship  
wholly to inferior deities. Others by the supreme God un-  
derstood the sun, or confounded him with the principal of their  
hero divinities. And many there were who supposed the do-  
minion and government of things to be divided among a plu-  
rality of gods whom they regarded as supreme in their several  
districts : or if any of them was esteemed to be superior in  
power and dignity to the rest, yet still he was supposed to be  
of the same kind and nature with them. It cannot therefore  
be justly said that there has been a universal consent of



mankind in the notion of one supreme God, though I readily own such a consent as to the existence of some superior invisible divine power or powers: and that scarce any nation can be mentioned which did not acknowledge some deity or other. And so far there is, and has been in all ages, a general consent of mankind against the atheists. Accordingly Plato and Cicero, and others of the ancients, before our Saviour's coming, who speak of a universal consent of mankind concerning the Deity, make the object of that consent to be not one supreme God, but the gods: and the providence they mention as generally believed and acknowledged is the providence of the gods. Several passages to this purpose have been produced above, which I need not here repeat. But after Christianity had made some progress in the world, the advocates for Paganism pretended that all mankind acknowledged and adored the one true supreme God, and there was but one universal religion among all nations. There is a remarkable passage of Maximus Tyrius to this purpose which has been often quoted. I shall give it to the reader in Dr. Cudworth's translation, which seems to me to be a just one. He asserts, that "if all men were required to declare their sense concerning God, one would not say one thing and another another. No; not the Scythian, nor the Greek, nor the Hyperborean.—That in other things we find men speaking very discordantly from one another; all men as it were differing from all concerning honest and dishonest, good and evil. Nevertheless, adds he, in this great war, contention, and discord, you may find every way throughout the world one agreeing law and opinion, that there is one God the King and Father of all, and many gods, the sons of God, co-reigners together with God: these things both the Greeks and Barbarians alike affirm, both the inhabitants of the continent and sea-coast, both the wise and unwise."\*

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\* Max. Tyr. dissert. i. p. 5, 6. Oxon. 1677. The learned and ingenious Dr. Sykes, who endeavours to show that the gentiles by the mere light of nature had generally a knowledge of the unity and perfections of God, and the other main principles of natural religion, lays a great stress on this passage. See his *Principles and Connection of Natural and Revealed Religion*, p. 364, 365.

Here he evidently puts his own Platonic system upon us as the universal system of all mankind. But how came he to know that all nations agreed in this? We have nothing for it but his own word. He represents it as if there was no difference among them in their notions of the Divinity; that if they were required to declare their sense of God, one would not say one thing and another another, but all would say the same thing; which is plainly contrary to truth and fact. For if we enquire into the ideas they had of the Divinity, or of superior invisible powers, we shall find there was a vast difference among them. "Deos esse nemo negat," saith Cicero, "quales sint, varium est." And again, "Multi de diis prava sentiunt." The authority therefore of Maximus Tyrius is of no great weight.

Dr. Cudworth also cites a passage of Plutarch, *De Isid. et Osir.* to the same purpose, which he translates thus. "The gods are not different in different nations, as if the Barbarians and Greeks, the southern and northern inhabitants of the globe, had all different gods. But as the sun, and the moon, and the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, are common to all, though called by several names, in several countries; so one reason ordering these things, and one providence dispensing all, and the inferior subserving ministers thereof having had several names and honours bestowed upon them by the laws of several countries, have been everywhere worshipped throughout the whole world: and there have been also different symbols consecrated to them, the better to conduct and lead on men's understanding to divine things: though this hath not been without danger or hazard of casting men upon one or other of these two extremes, either superstition or atheism."\* Here again, we have on-

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\* Plutarch. Oper. tom. II. p. 377. F. 378. A. Edit. Francof. The Chevalier Ramsay, in his *Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*, vol. II. p. 87. quoting this passage of Plutarch makes this reflection upon it: that "it is as unjust and unreasonable in the Christian priests to call the heathens polytheists, as it would be in the Pagans to call the Europeans so, because the French call him Dieu, the English God, the Italians Dio, &c." This charge, if it were true, would equally hold against the Scriptures, which certainly represent the heathen

ly Plutarch's bare assertion, representing his own opinion as that of all mankind: and in like manner we find him in the same treatise representing the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good the other evil, which he himself pleads for, as the universal doctrine of the wise men of all nations from the most ancient times. The passage now quoted from him, and indeed the whole of that treatise, is manifestly designed as an apology for the Pagan idolatry and superstition, under a pretence that their multiform worship, paid to a multiplicity of deities, was only an address to the one supreme God under different names and symbols. He denies that there are different gods worshipped in different countries, and yet he had observed but a little before that the Egyptians supposed their gods to be not common to all men, but peculiar to themselves. And elsewhere he says that all agree that there are gods: but concerning their number, their order, their essence, and power, there is great dissention among them. The philosophers differ from the poets and the legislators, and these from the philosophers. See his *Amator. Oper. tom. II. p. 763. C. D.* Immediately after the passage above cited from him, he recommends philosophy as necessary to guide men to a right understanding of their sacred rites; and says, they ought to be taken in that sense which is most consistent with reason. It is plain from this, that he was resolved, if he found them not consistent with reason, to make them appear so, and to put a sense upon them which should cover their absurdity. And indeed he has given several specimens of this way of interpretation in that work, though many of his allegorical explanations are strangely forced and unnatural. He supposes here that without the guidance of philosophy the people would not rightly understand the sacred rites. But it does not ap-

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as polytheists, as against the Christian priests. But that there was a great deal more in the heathen polytheism than this gentleman would make us believe, may be proved with the clearest evidence, and has been sufficiently shown in the course of this work. Nor is any great stress to be laid upon a few passages of some of the philosophers, who endeavoured to put plausible colours upon the Pagan idolatry, especially after Christianity had made its public appearance.

pear that the people consulted the philosophers about their deities, or the worship they rendered to them. They had always been accustomed to worship those as so many different deities, whom some of the philosophers represented as only different names of one God, and they paid little regard to those philosophical interpretations, which had no effect on the public worship. And indeed if they had hearkened to the philosophers, it would not have much mended the matter; since it has been shown that the most eminent of them, instead of reclaiming the people from their idolatry and superstition, rather encouraged them in it, and by deifying the things of nature, opened a way to the most gross and extensive idolatry. The manner in which Plutarch concludes this passage betrays a consciousness, that after all his attempts to give a plausible account of the heathen theology, there was great danger of its precipitating men either into an extravagant superstition; or into atheism.

I readily own that at the time when Maximus Tyrius, Plutarch, and Apuleius wrote, who all talk in the same strain, the unity of God was far more generally known and acknowledged among the Pagan nations than before. But this was not owing to the reasoning of the philosophers, but to the light of Christianity, which then became generally diffused, and for which the Jewish revelation had prepared the way. Justin Martyr, who lived nearly about the same time with those philosophers I have mentioned, declares that "there was no part of mankind, whether Greeks or Barbarians, or by whatsoever name they are called, where praises and thanksgivings were not offered to the Father and Maker of the universe, in the name of a crucified Jesus."\* Supposing the manner of expression to be hyperbolical, yet it shows that it was well known that Christianity had then produced great effects, in spreading the knowledge of the true God among the nations, even among the remote and barbarous.

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\* Dial. cum Tryph. Oper. p. 345. C. Paris, 1636.

In the preceding ages of Paganism the doctrine of the Unity was a secret only committed to a few, who did not publish it to the people. This appears from the testimonies produced even by those learned authors themselves, who want to make it pass for the general doctrine of the Pagan world. For they either suppose it to have been taught in the mysteries which were celebrated in different nations, or to have made a part of the arcane theology of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians, &c.

As to the mysteries, if, as the learned author of the Divine Legation of Moses has endeavoured to prove, the doctrine of the one supreme God, the Creator and Governor of the world, was taught there, it was the peculiar doctrine of the greater mysteries, communicated under the most tremendous seal of secrecy to such only of the initiated as were fit to be intrusted with the secret, and who were under the most solemn obligations not to reveal it. And can it with any consistency be supposed, that this would have been reserved for the mysteries as a profound secret which it was not lawful to reveal, if it was a thing which the people in general were acquainted with before, and which was an article of the common received religion? But in justice to the learned author last referred to it must be owned, that he is not chargeable with this inconsistency. He says, "the knowledge of God" "was communicated to a few select Gentiles in the mysteries celebrated in secret."\* That "they shut up the glory of God in their mysteries, from a false notion, that the vulgar knowledge of God would be injurious to society:" and he adds, that "in the open worship of Paganism, either public or particular, the creature was the sole object of adoration."†

The learned Dr. Sykes, who seems very desirous to make the doctrine of the Unity, and perfections of the Deity, pass for the universal doctrine of the Pagans, and which they derived not from revelation or tradition, but from the mere

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\* Div. Leg. vol. I. p. 166. 4th. edit.

† Ibid. p. 196.



The eminent Dr. Cudworth frequently observes, that "from the ancient Egyptian theology the Greekish and European is derived." And he has taken a great deal of pains to show, that "the Egyptians had among them an acknowledgment of one supreme universal numen." This is the subject of the 18th section of the 4th chapter of his Intellectual System: though I must confess, if this be understood of the one true God, the proofs that are brought for it throughout that long section, which takes up near fifty pages, do not seem to me to be satisfactory. He himself asserts, and it appears to be so from the testimonies produced by him, that "as well according to the Greeks as the Egyptians, the first or supreme God, and the  $\pi\rho\tau\acute{o}\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$  of the universe, were really the same thing."\* But if it should be granted, that the Egyptian wise men had right notions of the one supreme God, the Doctor himself represents this as a part of their arcane theology, which was imparted to a very few, and carefully concealed from the people.

I think enough has been said to show, that there is no sufficient ground for what this learned writer asserts, that according to the received theology both of the Greeks and Latins, not only the philosophers and wise men, but even the vulgar Pagans, acknowledged the one supreme God, the Lord of heaven and earth, the same whom we adore, and directed their worship to him under the name of Jupiter. And, indeed there are several passages in his book not very consistent with this scheme. He distinguishes the vulgar theology of the Pagans, under which he comprehends both the *poetical* and *mythical*, and the *civil* or *political* theology, from the *natural* and *true* theology.† And he seems to confine what he says of the worshipping the one true God under different names and titles to those whom he calls the "more intelligent Pagans."‡ Who these are he does not distinctly inform us, but probably he intends to distinguish them from the gene-

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\* Intel. Syst. p. 345.

† Ibid. p. 477.

‡ Ibid. p. 265.

ality of the vulgar. And it appears from several passages which have been produced from him in the course of this work, that even the most learned among the Pagans were for the most part greatly deficient and wrong in their notions of the one supreme God: that all of them in general were world-worshippers, and worshipped the several parts of this material system, which they looked upon to be animated, as parts and members of the Divinity: that the most refined of them agreed in these two things, the breaking and crumbling the one simple Deity, and multiplying it into many gods: and then in theologizing the whole world, and deifying the natures of things, accidents, and inanimate bodies: \* that the people by Jupiter, the chief of their deities, generally understood the Jupiter of the poets and mythologists: and that there was a perpetual jumble or mixture of herology, or the history of their hero gods, and physiology, along with their theology: that their public political worship had an appearance of a plurality of distinct independent divinities, and that the people regarded and worshipped them as such: and that they were generally strangers to what he calls the recondite theology of the Pagans, viz. that the one God was worshipped under different names and manifestations: these concessions, and others of the like kind, which this learned author is frequently obliged to make, do in reality overthrow the hypothesis which he takes so much pains to establish.

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\* Intel. Syst. p. 532, 533.



## CHAP. XIX.

*A second general reflection. The corruption of religion in the Heathen world is no just objection against the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence. God did not leave himself without witness amongst them. They had for a long time some remains of ancient tradition originally derived from revelation. Besides which, they had the standing evidences of a Deity in his wonderful works. The Jewish revelation was originally designed to give a check to the growing idolatry, and had a tendency to spread the knowledge and worship of the one true God among the nations: and it actually had that effect in many instances. If the generality of the Pagans made no use of these advantages, but still persisted in their idolatry and polytheism, the fault is not to be charged upon God, but upon themselves.*

THE representation which hath been made of the state of the heathen world may possibly give occasion to the enemies of all religion, to arraign the wisdom, the righteousness, and goodness of Divine Providence. It may seem scarce reconcilable to the moral administration of God, supposing him to concern himself about mankind, to leave all nations in general to continue for many ages in such a deplorable state of darkness, superstition, and idolatry, without affording them any means to guard against it, or recover them from it. And if this were really the case, it might seem to furnish a strong objection against Providence: but I shall now proceed to show that this is far from being a just and fair account of this matter.

It hath been already observed, that God gave a sufficient revelation of himself and of his will to the first parents and ancestors of the human race, before and after the flood, to be by them transmitted to their posterity: that besides the general revelations made to Adam and Noah, and which through them were promulgated to the whole human race, God was pleased from time to time in those early ages to make particular discoveries of himself to particular persons in different countries, which had a tendency to preserve the knowledge of the one true God, of his providence, and the worship due to him: that considerable remains of the ancient primitive religion and traditions continued for some time among the nations, and which they were under the strongest obligations to main-

tain in their purity: and that the standing evidences of a Deity in the works of creation and providence, concurred to give an additional weight to those traditions concerning the one true God, the great Creator and Governor of the world. For though it has been matter of controversy, whether men that had not heard of a Deity, could, if left to themselves without instruction, have come to the knowledge of the one true God merely by the unassisted force of their own reason; yet it is acknowledged by all, that when once the idea of God has been known and communicated, the consideration of his wonderful works has a manifest tendency, if duly improved, to preserve that idea, which is agreeable to the common reason of mankind. In this respect God never left himself without witness in any age or nation of the world. Taking all this together, it cannot be denied, that enough was done on God's part in his dispensations towards the human race to keep up a sense of the Deity, and the knowledge and practice of religion in the world. And if he had done no more in an extraordinary way, but had after this left men wholly to the light of nature and reason, strengthened with those traditionary helps which were originally owing to divine revelation, none could have reasonably found fault.

It was in Chaldea, Canaan, Egypt, and the neighbouring countries, that the great corruption first began; or at least these were the places where it made the most considerable progress, and from whence it seems to have been derived to other nations. And accordingly it pleased God in his wise and good providence to take proper methods for putting an early check to the growing corruption in those parts of the world where it chiefly prevailed. To this purpose he called Abraham, and made extraordinary discoveries of his will to him, who was a person of great eminence, and an illustrious example of faith and piety. The fame of his wisdom and virtue has spread far and wide among the nations, as appears from the testimonies of Berosus, Hecataeus, and Nicolaus Damascenus, cited by Josephus, as also from what is said of him by Alexander Polyhistor, Eupolemus, Artapanus, and

others, whose testimonies may be seen in Eusebius.\* And his name is mentioned with honour all over the east to this day. He sojourned in Chaldea, in Egypt, and in Canaan, where also lived that eminent person Melchisedek, and others, among whom the patriarchal religion was still preserved. Abraham appears, by the account given of him, to have been very careful to instruct his household, which was very numerous, in the true religion. Gen. xviii. 19. And from him, by Hagar and Keturah, proceeded many and great nations, among whom the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and religion in its main fundamental articles, seems to have continued for some ages. This may be gathered from several passages in the book of Job. And the same might probably appear concerning some other nations, if we were better acquainted with the ancient history of mankind. But particularly care was taken to preserve the true religion in the line by Isaac, the heir of Abraham's faith and of the promises, from whom came Esau and Jacob and their numerous descendants. The advancement of Joseph in Egypt by an extraordinary providence, and the settling of Jacob and his family there, which soon grew up into a nation, and among some of whom at least the knowledge of the true God was still in some measure maintained, ought to have had a good effect upon the Egyptians.

It is probable, that there were for a long time particular persons among the nations, who were not as yet infected with the common idolatry. But their authority and influence was of small weight, and little regarded. It pleased God therefore in his great wisdom and goodness towards mankind, as a farther preservative against the spreading idolatry, which was in danger of becoming universal, to make discoveries of his will not merely to a few particular persons, but to a whole nation set apart for that purpose. By an extraordinary divine interposition, a constitution of a peculiar kind was established, the fundamental principle of which was, the acknow-

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\* Præp. Evangel. lib. ix. cap. 16, 17, 18, 19.

ledgment and adoration of the one living and true God, and of him only. And to give weight to this constitution, which was so different from those established by the legislators in other countries, who made idolatry and polytheism the basis of their several polities, its divine authority was confirmed by the most illustrious attestations, and by a series of wonderful acts, which exhibited the most amazing displays of his unequalled power and glory. Such was the Mosaic constitution; which was introduced with a glorious triumph over idol deities even in Egypt, the principal seat of idolatry, and was attended with such circumstances as were peculiarly fitted to awaken and engage the attention of mankind. The people among whom this constitution and polity was erected, were not placed in a remote and obscure corner of the earth, but in such a situation as was admirably fitted for diffusing the knowledge of their religion and laws. They were placed in the centre of the then known world, between Egypt and Arabia on the one hand, and Syria, Chaldea, and Assyria on the other, among whom the first great kingdoms were erected, and from whence knowledge and learning seem to have been derived to the western nations. And they were also in the neighbourhood of Sidon and Tyre, the greatest emporiums in the world, from whence ships went to all parts, and who planted colonies in the most distant countries. Nor were the Israelites themselves a very small and contemptible people. Considering the amazing multiplication of their nation, they bore no very inconsiderable proportion to the numbers of the rest of mankind in those ages of the world.\* And their peculiar polity, together with the extraordinary acts of the Divine Providence towards them, had a natural tendency to put the neighbouring people upon making an inquiry into their religion and laws, which would be apt to lead them to the acknowledgment and adoration of the one true God, and to discover to them the folly and unreasonableness of their own supersti-

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\* See concerning this the Postscript to Dr. Waterland's *Scripture Vindicated*, part 2d. p. 138, 139.

tion and idolatry. And that this was really part of the design which the Divine Wisdom had in view in his dispensations towards the people of Israel, appeareth from several express passages of Scripture.\* Their laws indeed were so contrived as to keep them distinct from other people, and it was necessary for wise ends they should be so; but they were ready to receive among them those of other nations, who were willing to forsake idolatry, and to worship the one true God, the Creator of the universe, and him only. In the most flourishing times of their state, particularly in the reigns of David and Solomon, they had an extensive dominion and correspondence. And afterwards they had frequent intercourse with Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia. And if we consider what is related concerning Hiram, king of Tyre, and the queen of Sheba, as well as the memorable decrees of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Darius the Mede, Cyrus, Darius Hystaspes, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia, the greatest monarchs then upon earth, and who published to the world the veneration they had for the God whom the Israelites adored, as the great Lord of the universe; and if to this be added the eminent advancement of Daniel, and his three companions, who were zealous adorers of the Deity, in opposition to all idolatry; and afterwards the great power and authority of Esther and Mordecai, and the special favour shown to the Jews in the reign of king Ahasuerus, when we are told that "many of the people of the land became Jews:" if we consider these things, it is very probable that the fame of their laws, and of the remarkable interpositions of Divine Providence in their favour, whilst they continued in the observation of those laws, as well as of the calamities which had befallen them, when they fell off from their law to the worship of idol deities, was diffused far and wide among the nations. And this might contribute, in more instances than is commonly imagined, to keep up the knowledge of the one true God, the Maker and

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\* See particularly Exod. vii. 5. ix. 16. xiv. 4. Numb. xiv. 13, 14, 21. Deut. iv. 6. 1 Kings viii. 41, 42, 43. Psal. xxii. 27. lxxvii. 2, 3. lxxv. 29, 31, 32.

Lord of the universe, and to give some check to the prevailing idolatry.

I am sensible that there are many who are very unwilling to acknowledge that the Gentiles, or any of their great and wise men, received any great advantage from the Jews with respect to the knowledge of the one true God.\* And for

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\* It is a thing well known that many of the primitive fathers of the Christian church insisted upon it, that the Greeks borrowed their learning and knowledge from the Hebrews. And it cannot be denied, that some of those good men carried this too far, and were ready to catch at any thing in the writings of the Greek philosophers and poets, which seemed to bear even the most distant resemblance to what might be found in the books of Moses and the prophets. In opposition to this, some of the moderns have gone into the contrary extreme. An ingenious and learned writer, whom I have had occasion to mention before, has taken a great deal of pains to examine and expose the instances produced by the fathers in support of their hypothesis. Dr. Sykes' *Principles and Connexion of Natural and Revealed Religion*, p. 440, et seq. But supposing those instances to have been wrong chosen, (though I do not think that he has proved that they are all so) it would only show that they were mistaken in those particular instances, but not that the notion itself is absurd and false. He readily allows, and even asserts, that the Greek philosophers learned many things from the Egyptians and Chaldeans, but will by no means grant they learned any thing from the Hebrews. Yet he himself observes that "it is certain Moses lived long before any of the Greek philosophers; that the first good things any of them have said about God, the creation of the world, &c. were said by Moses, and the prophets, and were said before any of their philosophers pretended to advance such notions." *Ibid.* p. 493. He adds, indeed, that "Egypt taught this principle, as well as Judea, and so did the Magians." But we have no authentic monuments to assure us of the ancient theology of the Egyptians and Magians, as we have concerning that of the Hebrews. Since, therefore, the Greeks, by his own acknowledgment, travelled into the East "to get at the knowledge of the Unity, and the like important truths of natural religion," (*ibid.* p. 383.) what reason can be assigned why the Jews alone of all the eastern nations should be excluded, when we have much greater certainty that they taught these articles long before the Greek philosophers flourished, than we have concerning any of the other nations to which they travelled for knowledge? It is generally agreed, among the ancients, that Pythagoras travelled into Egypt; and the same writers who inform us of this, do also acquaint us that he went into Phœnicia and Babylon, and continued there several years; and at Babylon the Jews were at that time well known. And Porphyry, in his *Life of Pythagoras*, as cited by our learned author himself, expressly says that he not only travelled among the Egyptians and Arabians, but also went to the Hebrews and Chaldeans in order to acquire learning. The same may well be supposed concerning Plato, who imitated Pythagoras in his travels. The Doctor,

this purpose, they represent them as the most despicable people upon earth, and for whom all other nations had the utmost contempt and aversion. That the populace hated and despised them and their religion, and that many of the philosophers affected to do so too, is very true; but that this was not universally the case, admits of a clear proof. Any man will be convinced of this that impartially considers the testimonies produced by Eusebius from heathen authors, in the ninth book of his Evangelical Preparation. Theophrastus, as cited by Porphyry, represents the Jews as a nation or generation of philosophers, “*φιλοσοφοὶ τὸ γένος ὄντες*,” and who were wont to converse with one another concerning the Divinity, “*περὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ*,” to whom they offered up their prayers and vows.\* Hecataeus of Abdera, who was not only a philosopher, but a man well versed in affairs, gives an advantageous account of the Jews, as Josephus has shown, in his first book against Apion. And Origen says that this Hecataeus, in his

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indeed, objects, that there was no translation of the Jewish Scriptures into Greek, so early as the days of Pythagoras, or even as the time of Plato: but this does not hinder, but that they might have opportunities of conversing with some of the Jews in Egypt, Phœnicia, or Chaldea. The Egyptian and Chaldean language was also foreign both to Pythagoras and Plato, and yet the Doctor supposes that they took from them several of their notions and principles; so it might be with regard to the Jews, among whom the Phœnician, Chaldee, or Syriac language was then in common use. In Plato's time there were no doubt many of the Jews that understood Greek; and they had been for a long time settled in the Lesser Asia, as well as in many parts of the East. I see, therefore, no absurdity in supposing, with Justin Martyr, and others of the fathers, though Dr. Sykes blames them for it, that Plato might borrow some of his sublime notions concerning God from the Jews, or at least from those that had them from the Jews; which might have been the case of some of the Egyptians themselves. For it appears, from the express testimony of Scripture, that the Egyptians had a high veneration for Moses. “The man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.” Exod. xi. 3. And considering the intercourse that was carried on from time to time between Egypt and Judea, both in the time of Solomon, and afterwards, it is not improbable that some of their wise men might desire to have access to the Jewish law, and to some of their writings, so far at least as to learn some things from them, of which they made their own use, though they did not think proper to acknowledge it.

\* Porphyr. de Abstin. lib. i. Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. ix. cap. 2.

History of the Jews, which was extant in his time, expresses his admiration of the wisdom of that nation.\* Megasthenes, in a passage quoted by Clemens Alexandrinus, ranks those "that are called Jews in Syria" with the "Brahmins in India," who were of the highest reputation for wisdom among the Pagans, and represents them as having taught the same things with the Greek philosophers.† By comparing this with what Strabo tells us from Megasthenes, it appears that the things here referred to are such as these; that the world had a beginning and shall have an end; that God made and governs it, and pervades the whole; and that the earth was made out of a watery mass.‡ And as it is well known that the Greek philosophers travelled into the East for knowledge, the Jews may well be reckoned among those from whom they derived these principles. In like manner, Numenius, a famous Pythagorean philosopher, in his book, *περί τ' αγαθῶν*, speaking of the *δόγματα*, the doctrines and institutes, in use among the most celebrated nations, mentions the Jews along with the Brahmins, the Magi, and the Egyptians. And Origen informs us concerning the same Numenius, who, he says, was a person of great learning, that he reckons the Jews among the nations which believe God to be incorporeal; and that he was not ashamed to make use of the words of their prophets, and to interpret their figurative ways of expression.§ Artapanus wrote a book concerning the Jews, quoted by Alexander Polyhistor, large extracts of which are preserved by Eusebius; and though his account is mixed with fables, it serves to show the high opinion the heathens themselves entertained of Moses. Among other things, he says of him that he delivered every thing useful to mankind; that the Egyptian priests counted him worthy of divine honour, and attributed to him the invention of philosophy, and called him Hermes or Mercury.|| Eupolemus calls him the first wise man, "τὸν πρῶτον σοφόν."¶ And Strabo,

\* Origen. contra Cels. lib. i. p. 13. and Spenser's notes upon it.

† Ap. Euseb. ubi supra, lib. ix. cap. 6. ‡ Strabo, lib. xv. p. 1040. A. Amst.

§ Origen. contra Cels. lib. i. p. 13.

|| Apud Euseb. ubi supra, lib. ix. cap. 27.

¶ Ibid. cap. 26.



in his account of the Jews, speaks very honourably of Moses, as having entertained nobler notions of the Divinity than the Egyptians, or Lybians, or Greeks. He makes the cause of his forsaking Egypt to be his being dissatisfied with the notions and worship of the Deity which obtained there: and that many good men, and who honoured the Deity, “*πολλοὶ ἐμῶντες τὸ θεῖον*,” accompanied him. And that those who succeeded him continued for some time to be workers of righteousness, and to be truly pious worshippers of God, “*δικαιοσύνη γούντες καὶ θεοσεβεῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ὄντες*.”\* In like manner Justin, out of Trogus Pompeius, praises the ancient Jews for their justice joined with religion. “*Justitia religione permixta.*” That great man Varro plainly signifies that he thought the Jews were in the right in worshipping one God, and without an image. He gives it indeed as his opinion, that they worshipped Jupiter, only they called him by another name: where by Jupiter he means the highest God in the philosophical sense, which according to him was the soul of the world. St. Austin, who mentions this passage of Varro, represents him as not knowing what he said when he spoke thus, but that this however might be concluded from it, that he who was the most learned of the Romans, and a man of so great knowledge, hereby gave testimony that the God of the prophets, and whom the Jews worshipped, was in his opinion the supreme God. “*Ipse est deus quem Varro doctissimus Romanorum Jovem putat, nesciens quid loquatur. Quod ideo commemorandum putavi, quoniam vir tantæ scientiæ, nec nullum istum deum potuit existimare nec vilem. Hunc enim eum esse credidit quem summum putavit Deum.*”† Porphyry, in his first book of the Philosophy of Oracles, produces an oracle of Apollo, which speaking of those who knew and taught “the way of the blessed,” particularly mentions the “Egyptians, Assyrians, or Chaldeans,” and the “whole nation of the Hebrews.”

\* Strabo, lib. xvi. p. 1104.

† Augustin. de Civ. Dei, lib. xix. cap. 22. p. 428. compared with lib. iii. cap. 9. p. 74. et lib. iv. cap. 31. p. 87.

In another oracle mentioned by the same author, it is said that the Chaldeans and Hebrews "alone obtained wisdom, purely worshipping God, the eternal or self-originate king, " *—αὐτογένεθλον ἀνάκτα.*" Another oracle is there also quoted, in which they are called " *ἀριζήλητοι Ἑβραῖοι*, illustrious or worthy to be emulated." Though little stress is to be laid on the testimony of Apollo's oracles, it shows the opinion which had obtained among the heathens themselves of the wisdom and religion of the Hebrews. For if their fame had not been far spread on this account, the oracle would scarce have described them under that character. To all which may be added the decrees made in their favour by the Romans and other states, in which honourable mention is made of them, and they are allowed to observe their own laws and customs without disturbance. Many of these are produced by Josephus out of the public records, in the tenth chapter of the fourteenth book of his Jewish Antiquities. The decree of the city of Halicarnassus is particularly remarkable, which is introduced by saying, "since we have ever a great regard to piety towards God and holiness, we have decreed that as many men and women of the Jews as are willing so to do may celebrate their Sabbath, and perform their holy offices according to the Jewish laws, and may have their *Proseuchæ* at the sea side, according to the custom of their forefathers."\*

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\* It may not be improper here to observe that the peculiar name of God, which was in the highest veneration among the Jews, and whereby the one true God was most properly denoted as the self-existent Being, was not unknown to the Gentiles. Diodorus Siculus tells us of Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews, that he declared that the God who is called *Iaw* delivered his laws to him. Diod. Sic. Biblioth. lib. i. Philo Biblius, the translator of Sanchoniathon's Phœnician history, calls him *Iaw*, where he pretends that Sanchoniathon received his history from Jerombaal, the priest of the God *Iaw*, who was near the time of Moses, and lived before the Trojan war. Apud Euseb. Præp. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 9. p. 31. A. B. Macrobius tells us that the oracle of the Clarian Apollo being consulted which of the gods it was that was called *Iaw*, answered, "call him that is the highest of the gods *Iaw*." Where he speaks of him as the supreme Deity, though afterwards, as might be expected from the oracle, he applies it to the sun. Macr. Saturnal. lib. i. cap. 18. It is also probable that the name Jovis, and Jovis Pater, which was abbreviated into Jupiter, was derived from Jehovah, and as this name

From these several testimonies, to which others might be added, it appears that, notwithstanding the popular prejudices against the Jews, there were not a few among the heathens that had an esteem for them, and a good opinion of their laws. And as it was well known that they worshipped one only God, the Maker of heaven and earth, it is very probable that some of those passages which are admired in the Pagan writers, such as that of Sophocles and Aratus above mentioned, might have been originally owing to light derived from the Hebrews. Many of them, from the beginning of the Persian empire, were not only scattered abroad through Persia, Babylonia, and other parts of the east, but were seated in the Lesser Asia. And Providence ordered it so that their numbers continually increased, and their dispersions answered a valuable end. Cicero speaks of it as a thing well known, that the Jews were wont to send gold every year from Italy, and all the Roman provinces, to their temple at Jerusalem.\* The elder Agrippa, in a letter written to the Emperor Caligula, of which Philo gives us an account, tells him, that both the continent and the most remarkable islands were full of Jewish colonies; and that scarce any country of note could be mentioned in which some of them had not their residence.† To the same purpose Agrippa the younger, in a speech to the Jews, endeavours to dissuade them from entering into a war with the Romans, from this consideration, that they would thereby expose their countrymen to ruin; for that there was not a people upon earth which had not some portion of their nation among them.‡ The same thing is said by Philo, who

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found its way into Italy in the most ancient times, so might the notion signified by it be also communicated. And indeed some remarkable traces of the ancient primitive religion seem to have continued in Italy in the first times of the Roman state; though afterwards this venerable name, which was originally designed to signify the one true God, became transferred to the chief of the idol deities, to whom the divine attributes and worship were also ascribed.

\* Oratio pro Flacco, n. 28.

† Philo, in Legat. ad Caium, Oper. p. 1031, 1032.

‡ Joseph. de Bel. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 16.

also affirm that there were not less than a million of Jews in Alexandria, and other parts of Egypt.\* And Strabo, as cited by Josephus, saith that "the Jews had already gotten "into all cities:" that it is not easy to find a place in the habitable earth, which hath not admitted that tribe of men amongst them: and that many imitated their manner of living, and made use of the same laws. He particularly observes that "a large part of the city of Alexandria was peculiarly "allotted to them: and that they were allowed to be governed "by their own laws."† Seneca, in his book *De Superstitione*, as cited by St. Austin, at the same time that he discovers a very strong prejudice against the Jews, and blames their rites, especially their solemnizing the Sabbath, as an idle superstition, yet signifies that this and other rites of theirs prevailed very much among the nations. "Cum interim usque eò sceleratissimæ gentis consuetudo convaluit, ut per omnes ferè "terras recepta sit: victi victoribus leges dederunt."‡ As the Sabbath was peculiarly set apart for commemorating the creation of the world, and honouring the Maker of the universe, if the observation of the Jewish Sabbath spread among the Gentiles, this shows that the knowledge and worship of the one true God was propagated among them. Add to all this, that the Jewish Scriptures having been translated into Greek, the language then almost universally understood, became very generally dispersed. It cannot, therefore, be justly said that the Gentiles were debarred from all benefit of revelation, since, besides the remains of ancient tradition still preserved amongst them, and which were originally owing to divine revelation, a considerable part of the heathen world had opportunities, by means of the Jews dispersed among them, of attaining to the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and discovering the error and vanity of their idolatry and polytheism. And that many were by this means brought

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\* Philo in Flac. Opera, p. 971.

† Apud Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiv. cap. 7. sect. 2.

‡ Apud August. De Civ. Dei, lib. vi. cap. 11. p. 124.

over from their idolatries, we have good reason to believe; both from several passages in Josephus, and from the numbers of devout Gentiles in many cities of note, when Christianity was first published: of which we have an account in the Acts of the Apostles. And if the main body of the Pagans in every nation, and even their wise men and philosophers, still continued obstinately to adhere to the ancient popular superstition and idolatry, and, instead of making a proper use of the advantages hereby given them, either despised the Jews as unworthy of their notice, and rejected their religion at once, without examination and inquiry, or hated them for having a religion so opposite to their own,\* the fault is to be

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\* Cicero, in his oration for L. Flaccus, calls the Jewish religion a "barbarous superstition," and represents it as "abhorrent from the gravity of the Roman name, the splendour of their empire, and the institutions of their ancestors." And yet if that great man had allowed himself to examine it, he would have found that it taught nobler notions of the Divinity than even their most admired philosophers. But the views of human policy, the pride of their own wisdom, the contempt they had for those whom they accounted and called barbarians, and their attachment to the rites and laws of their ancestors, hindered the greatest and wisest men of Greece and Rome from judging impartially of a religion which was so contrary to the established polytheism and idolatry. Nothing can be more unfair and disingenuous than the representations made by some of their celebrated historians of the original of the Jewish nation, of their religion and laws. There are, indeed, some strictures of truth in their accounts, but they are mixed with so many falsehoods and absurdities, as plainly show how strongly they were prejudiced against them, and how little care they took to get a right information concerning them, which, if they had been so disposed, they might easily have procured. Such are the accounts given of them by Justin, from Troguus Pompeius, by Diodorus Siculus, and Tacitus. This last mentioned author, who was a man of admirable parts and sagacity, and in other respects an exact and faithful writer, tells us, the Jews consecrated the image of an ass in the sanctuary of their temple, and made it the object of their worship, because, as he pretends, a herd of asses had led them to a rock where they found large springs of water, when they were ready to perish for thirst in the wilderness. Tacit. Hist. lib. v. cap. 4. What renders him the less excusable in adopting this silly story is, that soon after he himself is obliged to own, that "whereas the Egyptians pay divine honours to animals, and to images made by art, the Jews acknowledged but one God, to be apprehended only by the mind: they account those profane who frame images of the gods out of perishable materials in the form and likeness of men: and hold that that supreme eternal Being is neither liable to change, nor shall ever die: and therefore there are no images in their cities, much less in their

charged upon themselves, who neglected those means and helps, as they had done before the discoveries conveyed to them by ancient tradition, and the light held forth to them in the works of creation and providence. What farther shows the great propriety and usefulness of the peculiar Jewish constitution, and the revelation made to the people of Israel, is, that not only rays of light were from thence scattered abroad among the Pagans, which might have been of great advantage, if duly improved, but that it had a great tendency to prepare

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"temples."—"Egyptii pleraque animalia effigiesque compositas venerantur; "Judei mente solâ unumque numen intelligunt: profanos qui deum imagines, "mortalibus materiis, in speciem hominum effingunt: summum illud et æternum, neque mutabile, neque interitum: igitur nulla simulacra urbibus suis, "nec templis sunt." Tacit. Hist. lib. v. cap. 5. And accordingly he afterwards observes that Pompey, the first of the Romans that subdued the Jews, and who entered the temple by right of conquest, found no image of the gods there, but the holy place vacant and empty. Ibid. cap. 9. That great philosopher and historian, Plutarch, a man of vast reading, and who was curious and diligent in his inquiries, yet, in what relates to the Jews, betrays a shameful ignorance, or the strongest prejudices. He charges them, as Tacitus had done, with worshipping an ass; and is in a doubt whether they did not abstain from swine's flesh, out of a peculiar veneration they had for that animal. The account he pretends to give of their sacred rites is perfectly trifling and ridiculous. Plut. Sympos. lib. iv. Quæst. 5. Oper. tom. II. p. 670. et seq. And yet, if he had pleased, he might easily have procured better information. The Jews were dispersed in great numbers among the nations. Their sacred writings, which had been long translated into Greek, were in many hands. The books of Josephus and Philo, both of them fine writers, were extant. He indeed takes upon him to pronounce that what is said by themselves concerning these things is fabulous. But it is plain he did not consult the Jewish writings and records, which would have been the proper and rational way to get a right information. I think what Origen says to Celsus is extremely just: "It is proper to ask Celsus," says he, "why he who "mentions with approbation the histories of the Greeks and barbarians, and gives "credit to their antiquities, should only doubt of the antiquities of the Jews? If "the writers of other nations give a true account of their own affairs, why are "the Jewish prophets the only persons we refuse to believe?" Orig. contra Cels. lib. i. p. 12, 13. But that the true source of Celsus' prejudice against them was their maintaining the unity of God, in opposition to the common polytheism, may be gathered from what he himself saith of the people of Israel; that "those goat-herds and shepherds, following Moses as their leader, being "imposed upon by his rustic frauds, believed there is only one God." Ibid. p. 17, 18.

the world for receiving that most perfect dispensation which was to succeed it, and which was to be of a more general extent, and more universally diffused.

It appears from the several considerations which have been offered, that a great deal was done in the methods of Divine Providence, for preventing or reclaiming the nations from the idolatry and polytheism in which they came to be generally involved. And the state of religion among them would have had a quite different appearance, if they had made that use and improvement of the means that were put into their hands, which it was really in their power to have done, and had applied themselves with that care and diligence which a matter of such vast importance required. And therefore St. Paul justly pronounces concerning them, that they "liked not to retain God in their knowledge," and that they "were without excuse—ἀναπολογητοί," that is, unable to make a sufficient apology for themselves, if called to a strict account at the bar of God. Yet what allowances it may please him, in his infinite mercy, to make for the circumstances they were in, and the ignorance, errors, and prejudices, under which they laboured, we cannot take upon us to determine; but must leave it to him, the most wise and merciful as well as righteous Judge and Father of mankind, who will certainly do what is fittest and best.

It is proper on this occasion to observe the great goodness of God, and the patience and forbearance he exercised towards a corrupt and idolatrous world. Though they were so far fallen from the knowledge and worship of him, the only true God, and instead of glorifying him as God, gave the glory due to him alone to false and fictitious deities, he did not absolutely abandon them, nor pour forth those judgments upon them which their iniquities had deserved. He continued to do them good, in the methods of his wise and kind providence; and so ordered it, that some remains of religion were still preserved among them. The idea of a Deity, and a governing invisible power, and of a Providence that takes cognizance of human actions and affairs, though mixed with much obscurity, and attended with many and great errors,

was never utterly extinguished. There still remained some sense of the moral differences of things, and some feeble apprehensions of a future state of retributions. These things were helpful to lay some restraints upon vice and wickedness, to furnish some encouragements and supports to virtue, to give force to civil laws and government, and to maintain the face of order in the world. Such is the force of these principles, that where they are even in the least degree preserved and suffered to operate, they can scarce fail to produce some beneficial effects for the good of society. Whereas absolute atheism, and the want of all religion, saps the foundation of all order, tends to dissolve the strongest bands of human society, and to open a wide door for universal confusion and licentiousness. And therefore the reclaiming mankind from the darkness and corruption into which they were generally fallen, to the right knowledge, obedience, and adoration of the one true God, the clearing and confirming the main principles of religion, which were greatly weakened and obscured, and enforcing them by a divine authority and power on the minds and consciences of men, and the recovering men from the state of guilt and condemnation in which they lay involved, to a well-grounded hope of pardon and salvation; this must be acknowledged to be a design worthy of the Divine Wisdom and goodness. Such is the design of the Christian dispensation, which was introduced into the world at a time when it was most wanted, and when the need mankind stood in of such an extraordinary interposition of Divine Providence manifestly appeared.



## CHAP. XX.

*A third general reflection. Idolatry gathered strength among the nations, as they grew in learning and politeness. Religion, in several respects less corrupted in the ruder and more illiterate than in the politer ages. The arts and sciences made a very great progress in the heathen world : yet they still became more and more addicted to the most absurd idolatries, as well as to the most abominable vices ; both of which were at the height, at the time of our Saviour's appearance.*

ANOTHER important reflection, which may help to cast farther light on the present subject, is this, that superstition and idolatry, instead of being corrected and diminished, rather increased and gathered strength among the heathen nations, as they grew in learning and politeness. Any one that considers the accounts which are given us of the progress of arts and sciences, how from rude beginnings they were still advancing to greater perfection, and that as the nations became more knowing and civilized, these were continually improving, will be apt to think, that so it must have been with religion too. It is natural to suppose that, as their knowledge was more extended, and their understandings better cultivated, and exercised in the arts of reasoning, they must have more clearly seen the absurdity of superstition and idolatry, and have attained to higher improvements in religion, and in the knowledge and worship of the one true God, as well as in other branches of science. And yet, if we consult fact and experience, we shall find that the religion of the Gentiles in the most ancient times was in several instances more pure and simple, less encumbered and corrupted with idolatry, than in succeeding ages, when the arts and sciences had made a considerable progress. This seems to show that the knowledge men had of God, and religion, in the first ages, was originally owing, not merely to the efforts of their own reason, which was then little cultivated and improved, but to a divine revelation made to the first of the human race, and from them communicated to their posterity. It might have been hoped

that this tradition, which, when duly proposed, is agreeable to right reason, would have been preserved with great care, especially when learning and knowledge were improved: but it soon began to degenerate, and became the more corrupt the farther it was removed from its original. The true primitive theism, which was the most ancient religion of mankind, became soon adulterated with mixtures of polytheism, still preserving for the most part, amidst all their corruptions, some obscure idea of one supreme Divinity, till at length it was almost lost and confounded amidst a multiplicity of idol deities.

It has been already shown that the most ancient idolatry and deviation from the worship of the one true God, was the worship of heaven and the heavenly bodies. But the first idolaters, as Eusebius observes, did not erect statues or images to them, but contented themselves with fixing their eyes upon the visible heavens, and worshipping what they beheld there.\* This is agreeable to the representation made of it in the ancient book of Job, where it is intimated that those who then worshipped the heavenly bodies were wont to do it by lifting up their eyes towards heaven, and bowing and kissing their hands to them, when they appeared in their splendour. That holy man, to clear himself from all suspicion of idolatry, which was then making a progress in those parts, in his admirable apology expresses himself thus: "If I beheld  
" the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness—  
" and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath  
" kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished  
" by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is  
" above." Job xxxi. 26, 27, 28. And Moses seems to intimate the same thing, Deut. iv. 19. "Lest thou lift up thine  
" eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the  
" moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be  
" driven to worship and serve them." And he distinguisheth

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\* *Præpar. Evangel. lib. i. cap. 6. p. 17. Paris, 1628.*

this from the idolatry of image worship, which he had forbidden just before.

It is another observation of Eusebius concerning the idolaters of the most ancient times, that they made no mention of that multitude of hero deities which were afterwards worshipped both among the Greeks and barbarians. There was among them no theogonia, or fabulous account of the generation of the gods. The numerous rabble of gods and heroes, with the monstrous fictions relating to them, were of later date, and had their rise among the Egyptians and Phœnicians, and from them were propagated to the Greeks.\* It was among the Chaldeans, Phœnicians, and Egyptians, that image-worship, as well as that of hero gods or deified men, seems to have first obtained. The first approach towards image worship among the nations was, as some learned men probably suppose, their erecting stones and pillars in honour of their deities. This seems to have been an abuse of a custom that was originally used by the worshippers of the true God, who were wont to erect large stones as monuments in places where, in those ancient times, there had been remarkable divine appearances: and there they erected altars and offered sacrifices. Of this we have a memorable instance in that good man, Jacob. Having, at the end of his first day's journey towards Mesopotamia, had a divine vision, in which God was pleased to appear to him in a visible glory, attended with his holy angels, and repeated those promises to him which he had before made to his pious progenitors, Abraham and Isaac, he took a large stone, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it, and thereby consecrated it to a religious use; and this probably in conformity to ancient custom. And he called the name of that place Bethel, "the house of God," Gen. xxviii. 18, 19. At the same time he made a solemn vow, that if he returned in safety to his father's house, this stone which he had set up for a pillar should be God's house, that is, the place where he would erect an altar to the only true

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\* Euseb. ubi supra, cap. 9. p. 29, 30.

God, and offer sacrifices to him. And this accordingly, he afterwards did by the divine command : but he first took care to purify his family, and put away the strange gods which were among them ; some of his numerous family having privately introduced idolatrous usages. Gen. xxxv. 1—4. Some learned persons, particularly the famous Joseph Scaliger and Bochart, have ingeniously conjectured that, from the stone erected into a pillar by Jacob, and his calling the place Bethel, came the word *βαίθω* used among the heathens, and especially the Phœnicians, to signify those rude stones which were consecrated as symbols of the Divinity, and in which they thought some divine power resided.\* These were worshipped by them, as statues and images were afterwards. And in this, as well as other instances, the rites and usages which were originally designed in honour of the one true God, were in process of time misapplied to the worship of idol deities. In the Chron. Alexand. p. 89. it is said that the Assyrians were the first who set up a pillar to the planet Mars, and worshipped it as a god.† Herodian mentions a pillar or large stone erected in honour of the sun, and called Eligabalus. And Pausanias, in Arcadicis, observes that, in the most ancient times, universally among the Greeks, instead of images, rude stones had divine honours rendered ; “ *ἀντὶ ἀγαλμάτων εἶχον ἀγροὶ λίθαι τίμας.*” These were succeeded by statues and images, which at first had little workmanship bestowed upon them ; but as the arts began to flourish, and the worship of hero gods and goddesses became more in fashion, they were wrought up with great art and beauty. It was because pillars were so much abused to idolatrous purposes, that the religious use of them, as well as of statues and images, was expressly forbidden in the law of Moses. Levit. xxvi. 1. Deut. xvi. 22. The word in the Hebrew, in both these places, is *Matzebah*, rendered by our translators “ a standing image,” but, by the

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\* Scaliger Animadvers. in Euseb. p. 198. Bochart. Canaan, lib. ii. cap. 2.

† Shuckford's Connect. of Sacred and Profane History, vol. I. p. 328, 329.

Septuagint, *στήλη*, "a pillar," as it is also in the margin of our Bibles; and thus it is understood by the Jews, as Mr. Selden has shown.\*

Lucian, *de Dea Syria*, says, that the Assyrians derived the temples and statues of the gods from the Egyptians; but that anciently the temples of the Egyptians were without statues.† It is certain, however, that the worship of images in the form of men, and other animals, had obtained in Egypt and the neighbouring countries,‡ before the days of Moses, as appears from the prohibition of them in the second commandment, and which is more particularly expressed, Deut. iv. 16, 17, 18. But still there were several nations that did not as yet, nor for a long time after, worship images. Such were the ancient Persians, for which we have the testimonies of Herodotus, Xenophon, and Strabo. Clemens Alexandrinus informs us that the first image which was set up among them was a statue of Venus, by Artaxerxes, who, as Dr. Shuckford probably conjectures, was Ochus, in the latter times of the Persian empire.§ Bardesanes, as quoted by Eusebius, says that the Seres, a famous nation in India, had a law among them forbidding all worship of images. The same author observes concerning the Indian Brahmins, that, according to a tradition derived from their ancestors, they abstained from image worship.|| At what time images were first introduced among the Greeks, we have no certain account. But the use of them probably came into Greece from Egypt.

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\* *De Jure Nat. et Gent. lib. ii. cap. 6.*

† *Lucian. Opera, tom. II. p. 657. Amstel.*

‡ According to Diodorus Siculus, the Egyptians began with the worship of the sun and moon, and thence proceeded to worship the elements, the earth, water, fire, and air; and at last came to worship animals and reptiles. Thus idolatry still grew and increased amongst them. And the abuse of the hieroglyphical characters and sacred symbols, which were in early use in Egypt, contributed not a little to it. Thus, under pretence of superior wisdom, the purity and simplicity of the ancient religion became more and more corrupted,

§ *Shuckford, ubi supra, p. 346.*

|| *Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. lib. vi. cap. 10. p. 274, 275.*

The most ancient Greeks had no temples, but worshipped in the open air. It is said that Cecrops, who came from Egypt, first taught them to erect temples, and brought in the worship of hero gods and images: and in this he was followed by others of their ancient kings and legislators; and the number of their gods and goddesses, as well as the rites of their worship, were continually increasing, and received constant additions from the fables of their poets and mythologists. As to Italy, the best writers of their antiquities agree that the religion of the inhabitants in the most ancient times was different in several respects from that which prevailed in Greece in the latter ages. And it is particularly observed by Varro, concerning the ancient Romans, that they worshipped the gods without an image for more than one hundred and seventy years. And he adds, that if this had still continued, the gods would have been worshipped more purely. “*Quod si adhuc mansisset, castius dii observentur;*” of which he mentions the Jews as an example. Yea, he sticks not to declare that “they who first instituted images of the gods for the people, both took away from the cities the reverence of the gods, and added to the popular error.” “*Qui primi simulacra deorum populis posuerunt, eos civitatibus suis et metum demississe, et errorem addidisse.*”\* To the same purpose Plutarch, in his life of Numa, observes, that “he forbade the Romans to represent God under the form of man or beast; nor was there any graven or painted image admitted among them formerly. But for the space of the first one hundred and sixty years they built temples, but made no statue or image, as thinking it an impiety to liken the most excellent things to those that are mean and base; it being not possible to apprehend or approach God, *ἐφικτὸν θεῷ*, but by the understanding.”† But after-

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\* Apud Augustin. de Civ. Dei, lib. iv. cap. 31. p. 87.

† Macrobius, speaking of him whom he calls the highest God, affirms that antiquity formed no image of him. “*Nullum ejus simulacrum finxit antiquitas.*” In Somn. Scip. lib. i. cap. 2.

wards images were multiplied among them, as well as among the Greeks, and grew more and more in use in those ages when learning and the arts flourished. Their wise men and philosophers pleaded for images as necessary helps to human infirmity; and the people carried it so far as to think that there could be no religion without images. Hence they looked upon those nations which had no images as having no religion at all.\* And this was one of their principal objections against the primitive Christians, who were all zealous enemies to image worship, that they had no altars or images: "nullas aras, nulla nota simulacra." Thus the learned and polite nations fell short of some of the people whom they called barbarous, who, in this and some other instances, adhered more closely to the tradition of the first ages, and were strangers to the refinements of human learning and philosophy.

I had occasion to take notice before of the praises bestowed by Dionysius Halicarnasseus upon the religion of the first Romans. It appears from his account, that, in the most ancient times of the Roman state, when the people were esteemed rude and illiterate, their religion had more of simplicity, and less absurdity in it than afterwards, when they had commerce with the learned Greeks, and philosophy and the sciences had made a great progress among them. Hence the satirist, comparing the ancient with the latter times, observes that they had not then such a crowd of gods as they worshipped afterwards.

"Nec turba deorum

"Talis ut est hodie, contentaque sidera paucis

"Numinibus."

*Juven. Sat. xiii. v. 46, 47.*

They incorporated more of the poetic fabulous theology into the civil or public religion than they had formerly done. It

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\* Lactantius, speaking of the fondness of the heathens for images, especially those that were adorned with gold and jewels, observes, "nec ullam religionem putant, ubi illa non fulserint," lib. ii. cap. 6.

appears, from the writings of the learned Varro, who flourished in the latter times of the Roman republic, not long before the coming of our Saviour, that in his days their deities and sacred ceremonies were multiplied to an amazing degree. So far is it from being true, that they grew in the knowledge of religion, and in the pure worship of the true God; as they grew in literature, that on the contrary they were still more deeply immersed in idolatry and polytheism. Rome became at length the receptacle of all kinds of idolatry, even of the Egyptian rites. Thus, Lucan,

“ Nos in templa tuam Romana recepimus Isin  
“ Semideosque canes.”

Hence Tertullian upbraids the Romans, that, notwithstanding the high regard they professed to have for their ancestors, they had fallen off from those of their institutions, which had been rightly ordered. They restored the mysteries of Bacchus, which, by a decree of the senate, had been exterminated out of Rome and all Italy. The Egyptian deities, particularly Serapis, Isis, Harpocrates, Cynocephalus, or Anubis, which had been expelled the capital by the consuls, and their altars overturned, were again admitted, and the highest honours paid them.\*

Thus it appears that the illiterate ages, by keeping more closely to the traditions derived to them from the most ancient times, were free from some of those corruptions which were introduced in the politer ages. Idolatry and polytheism continued to gather strength in the midst of learning and philosophy. Not only the poets and priests, but the legislators and civil magistrates, many of whom were accounted wise men and philosophers, had a great hand in this. Aristotle, in a passage above quoted from him, after having observed that it had been delivered down from those of the most ancient times, both that the stars are gods, and that the divinity

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\* Tertul. Apol. cap. 6. Opera, p. 7. B. C. Paris, 1672.



containeth whole or universal nature, adds that all the other things were fabulously introduced for the persuasion of the multitude, and for procuring obedience to the laws, and promoting the public utility: such as the representing the gods to be of human form, or like to some other animals, with other things of that nature, and which are consequent upon these.\*

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\* *Metaphys. lib. xiv. cap. 8. Oper. tom. II. p. 1003. Paris, 1629.*

## CHAP. XXI.

*A fourth general reflection. Human wisdom and philosophy, without a higher assistance, insufficient for recovering mankind from their idolatry and polytheism, and for leading them into the right knowledge of God and religion, and the worship due to him. No remedy was to be expected in an ordinary way, either from the philosophers or from the priests, or from the civil magistrates. Nothing less than an extraordinary revelation from God could, as things were circumstanced, prove an effectual remedy. The wisest men in the heathen world were sensible of their own darkness and ignorance in the things of God, and of their need of Divine revelation.*

THE several considerations which have been offered make it sufficiently evident how little was to be expected from human learning and philosophy, for instructing mankind in the right knowledge and worship of the only true God, and for recovering them from the gross idolatry and polytheism in which they were generally involved. What the apostle hath observed, now appears to be undeniably true by fact and experience, "the world by wisdom knew not God." 1 Cor. i. 21. If there had been no other remedy, we must have continued under the Pagan idolatry and polytheism unto this day.

It is an easy thing to speak in high terms of what the light of nature and reason can lead men to, now that it has been so greatly refined and assisted by the light communicated from the Christian revelation. Men that have been educated under the gospel, and who have access to the discoveries there made, may pursue and improve those discoveries, and then securely boast of what mighty things they can do by the strength of their own reason and penetration. But the proper way to know the true force of natural reason, and what may be expected from it when left to itself, in the present state of mankind, is to consider what was done in matters of religion under the mere guidance of human reason, in those nations and ages in which it was diligently cultivated, and when polite literature and the liberal arts were in their highest elevation. It would argue great arrogance in us, to suppose that

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we have a more comprehensive reach of thought, greater penetration and force of reason, than those sublime geniuses, which have been the admiration of all succeeding ages. Since, therefore, they, with all their learning and vast abilities, were at so great a loss in what related to the knowledge and worship of the only true God, in opposition to all idolatry and polytheism, there is just ground to suppose, that, if we had been left merely to ourselves, and had not the benefit of divine revelation, we should have been still wandering in the mazes of error, even in matters of the highest consequence.

The age when Christianity first made its appearance in the world, was far from being an age of ignorance, if we speak of human literature, and the improvements of the arts and sciences. But the nations that were otherwise learned and polite, were sunk into the most deplorable ignorance, darkness, and corruption, in matters of religion. Now the question arises, what was proper to be done to recover them out of this their wretched state, to the right knowledge of God, and of their duty? In speculation it might be thought that human learning and philosophy might alone be an able and sufficient guide: there were among the heathens men of wonderful abilities, who spent their lives in studious inquiries, and made it their business to search into the reason and nature of things; and many of them travelled to the most distant countries, and to the places then most celebrated for science, in quest of knowledge: and it might probably be supposed that such persons, by their instructions, might reform the world, and reclaim them from their gross superstitions and idolatries, and lead them into just notions of God and religion. But was this the case in fact? Did they make any stand against the prevailing corruptions? Or work any reformation in the popular system of polytheism? Far from it. If any of them had just and good notions, they wanted a divine authority to enforce their dictates. Their dogmas passed only for fine speculations, or the opinions of this or that philosopher or sect of philosophers, with which the peo-

ple had little concern, and which, therefore, had but small influence. Accordingly we find in fact, that the popular idolatry and polytheism, and the many absurd and abominable rites of the heathen superstition, still kept their ground. Nor did the philosophers ever convert so much as a single village from idolatry. On the contrary, they patronized it by their maxims, and countenanced it by their practice. It is evident then that whatever high opinion some have entertained of the heathen learning and philosophy, it was unable to reform a corrupt and idolatrous world. It had been tried for many ages. "Philosophy," as Mr. Lock observes, "seems to have spent its strength, and done its utmost." And, yet after all, was found ineffectual. This furnisheth a plain and convincing proof that human reason, if left merely to itself without a higher assistance, is not a safe and sufficient guide in divine matters, and holds out an obscure and uncertain light: and that when men come to treat of these things in the fulness of their pride and self-sufficiency, and with a high conceit of their own wisdom, they, for the most part, either throw off all religion, or strangely corrupt or pervert its most important doctrines and principles. Reason may be, and has been, of great use, when under the conduct of divine revelation, and making use of the light which that affords: but, when trusting to its own force, it has affected an independency, and endeavoured to strike out new paths: it has often made wild work in religion, and plunged men into atheism, scepticism, and infidelity on the one hand, or into idolatry, superstition, and numberless varieties of error on the other.

And if it was a vain thing to look for a reformation in religion from the philosophers, from whom else could it be expected? Surely not from the priests, who were the great promoters of polytheism, and all the absurd rites of the Pagan superstition. Could it be thought, that they would instruct the people to abandon that idolatry by which they maintained their own reputation and interest? Or, would the lawgivers and politicians, and great men of the state, attempt it? If this was the design of the mysteries they instituted, it

is plain they were of little efficacy to draw the people off from the common polytheism, nor indeed, as they were managed, could be expected to do so. The public laws, in every city and country, established idolatry. Their most celebrated legislators interwove the worship of idol deities into their civil constitutions, and their ablest political writers, who wrote about the best forms of government, confirmed it. It might perhaps be hoped that, when a philosopher came to have the reins of government in his own hands, which was what Plato proposed as the best expedient for regulating the commonwealth, and administering it in the fittest manner, these great abuses would be rectified, and a better scheme of religion established. Such was Marcus Antoninus, a great emperor, and an excellent philosopher. But did he introduce a better form of religion, or a purer worship of the Deity? On the contrary, he himself observed the accustomed rites; he adored the popular deities, and even seemed zealous for the established superstition. And what other method could human wisdom devise, to reform and recover mankind from their idolatry and polytheism, to the right knowledge and worship of God, but the doctrines of their wise men and philosophers, the instructions of their priests, and the authority of the legislators and civil powers? And all these are found in fact and experience to be insufficient. Must the people therefore be left wholly to themselves, and their own natural notions? But these were corrupted to an astonishing degree; so that Cicero scrupled not to say, that the light of nature no where appeared.\* And as to the broken remains of ancient tradition concerning a Deity, a providence, and the world to come, which were originally owing to divine revelation, they became at length in a great measure defaced and overwhelmed with innumerable errors and superstitions. And indeed if men of the finest genius were at a loss, what could be expected from the vulgar? It is evident that, taking mankind

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\* Tuscul. Disput. lib. iii. cap. 1.

as they are, there was little ground to hope that they would ever, if left to themselves, have been able to recover from their prejudices, and lay aside those corruptions, those superstitions and idolatries, which have been for many ages received among their ancestors, and established by the laws, recommended and practised by their wise men and philosophers, and which were at the same time calculated to gratify their sensual appetites and inclinations. Notwithstanding all the aids of learning, the world still grew more and more corrupted both in principle and practice, more and more addicted to the most absurd superstitions and most abominable vices. And never were they both arrived to a greater height than at the time when our Saviour appeared.\*

After Christianity had made some progress, endeavours were used to revive the credit of the Pagan philosophy, and to raise it to a higher degree of reputation than before. Those they called Eclectics, professed to select that which was best out of every sect of philosophers, and to form the principles into one body. The Alexandrian school became famous, and it must be owned that in several things they ex-

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\* The learned Dr. Sykes, whom I have had frequent occasion to quote, and who has shown a high esteem for the powers of reason, and a strong prejudice in favour of the Pagan philosophers, plainly asserts not only the usefulness but the necessity of divine revelation, as things were circumstanced in the heathen world. He says that, "by the addition of very much absurdity and folly, by the gross idolatries they had every where established, by the abundance of fables they had mixed with truth; by the apparent falsehoods they had embraced; and through the great danger that every good man run, who should venture to show them the pure truth; there was a necessity of a reformation, and of calling men back to the true rule of action. How to remove the loads of rubbish, which by degrees had been thrown upon the beautiful fabric of truth, was more than the wisest mortal could tell, or dare to undertake? Every crevice was stopped by which light might enter; and this made even Socrates declare that he thought it best to be quiet, and expect, till somebody should come, and by a divine teaching, remove the mist from before men's eyes." *Plat. Alcib. II. et Phæd.* See Sykes' *Connexion and Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion*, p. 431, 432. And he had said before that "error must for ever have prevailed, had not a method been found out to propagate truth against all the powers and authority and influence of the men of this world." *Ibid.* p. 383.

ceeded those that had gone before them, and were more explicit in their declarations of the unity of God and advanced noble speculations concerning the divine attributes and providence: but there is great reason to think that for this they were very much indebted to the light received from the Christian revelation, though they were too proud to own it.

Eusebius acquaints us that there had been, from the first age of the Christian church, a school of sacred learning erected among the Christians at Alexandria, which continued to his time, and had been furnished with men eminent for their eloquence, and knowledge in divine things. He particularly mentions the celebrated Pantænus, as having presided in that school at the latter end of the second century, and who had been bred up in the principles of the Stoic philosophy.\* Jerome gives the same account, and that he was succeeded by Clemens Alexandrinus, who was also a man of great learning, and extremely well versed in the Pagan philosophy.† That eminent Alexandrian philosopher, Ammonius Saccas, so highly extolled by Porphyry and Hierocles, whom the latter Platonists and Pythagoreans regarded as their father, and from whom they derived what they called the sacred succession, lived and died a Christian, as both Eusebius and Jerome affirm, and this hath been the general opinion of the learned. Or if we should suppose with Fabricius that Ammonius Saccas was a different person from the Ammonius referred to by Eusebius and Jerome, yet still, by Porphyry's own acknowledgement, he had been educated a Christian under Christian parents. And though Porphyry pretends that, when he came to years of understanding, and "had acquired a taste of philosophy, he betook himself to a life agreeable to the laws," that is embraced Heathenism, yet it seems reasonable to believe that as he was acquainted with Christianity, he scattered many seeds of sacred truth in his philosophical lectures, originally derived from the Jewish and Christian revelations. He had both Christians and Pagans in his school; among others the

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\* Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. cap. 10.

† De Viris illust. cap. 38.

admired philosopher, Plotinus, and the famous Origen, who, Porphyry tells us, was one of his hearers, and made a great proficiency in the knowledge of philosophy, under this master. The Pagan philosophers that proceeded out of this school blended the notions received from the holy Scriptures with the Pagan theology and philosophy, and thereby rose, in several instances, to higher flights than their predecessors: and yet to show how little was to be expected from the heathen philosophy in its utmost refinement, they made no attempts to recover the people from their idolatry and polytheism, but rather used all their credit and efforts to uphold declining Paganism, and devised the most plausible colours to defend it. With this view they endeavoured to accommodate their philosophical schemes to the Pagan religion, and to support the one by the other. He that would form a just idea of the new philosophy which they wanted to introduce, may consult the learned Fabricius in his *Prolegomena* to the life of Proclus, by Marinus.

I shall conclude what relates to the Pagan philosophers, with observing that, though undoubtedly they had a high opinion of their own wisdom, yet the most eminent of them were sensible of the darkness, the ignorance, and uncertainty, they were under, especially in divine matters, and the great need mankind stood in of a divine revelation and instruction, to lead them into a right knowledge of God and religion.\* Something was offered concerning this before, p. 203, and p. 212. to which I refer the reader. I shall here subjoin some other passages to the same purpose. Plato, at the latter end

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\* See the learned Dr. Clarke's *Discourse on Natural and Revealed Religion*, under the seventh proposition, p. 306. et seq. edit. 7th. Lord Bolingbroke, in his *animadversions* on this part of Dr. Clarke's book, owns that Plato insinuates, in many places, the want or necessity of a Divine revelation: but he will not allow that the opinion of Socrates, Plato, and other philosophers, is any proof that the want was real. His exceptions to this have been elsewhere considered. *View of the Deistical Writers*, Vol. II. p. 63. edit. 3d. At present, I shall only observe, that by his own acknowledgment those great philosophers were themselves sensible of the need of Divine revelation, in the present state of mankind. Bolingbroke's *Works*, vol. V. p. 214, 215, 216. 4to.



of his sixth Republic, observes that "the same respect which the sun in the visible world has to sight, and the things which are seen, the very same has the *ἡ ἀγνοία*, that which is good (that is God) in the intellectual world to intellect and things which are understood: that as the eyes, when looking at things in the night, are almost blind, and as if they had no sight at all, but when turned to objects which the sun shines upon, see them clearly, so it is with regard to the mind. When it adheres to the *τὸ θ*, the Being which really is or exists, it understands and knows, and appears to have intellect: but when it turns to that which is mixed with darkness, and which is generated and corruptible, it is carried about with various opinions, and seems as if it had no understanding." Plat. Opera, p. 478, 479. Ficin.

In the dialogue called Theages, Plato introduces Socrates instructing a young man, Theages, whom his father brought to him to be taught wisdom: and, in the conclusion of that dialogue, he intimates to him, that if his attempt to learn wisdom were pleasing to God, he would make a great proficiency in it in a short time; if otherwise, not: and that he should therefore apply to him by prayers and sacrifices. Socrates seems there to have had the Delphian Apollo particularly in view, whom he elsewhere recommends: it appears, however, from what he here says, how sensible he was of the need men stood in of a divine assistance and instruction, in order to the obtaining true wisdom. The same thing appears from that noted passage in Plato's second Alcibiad, which is quoted at large by the learned Dr. Clarke.\* The purport of it is this: Socrates meets Alcibiades going to the temple to pray, and takes that occasion to convince him, that he knew not what to pray for in a right manner; and that it was not safe for him to pray in the temple, till God should dispel the darkness of his mind, so that he might be in a capacity of discerning between good and evil. And when Alcibiades upon this said, I think I must defer my sacrifices to that time, Socrates an-

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\* Ubi supra, p. 307.

swers, You have reason; it is more safe to do so, than to run so great a hazard. Socrates did not question the propriety or necessity of worshipping the Deity, as he shows on several occasions; but he thought that a divine instruction and assistance was necessary to enable men to perform it in a proper manner.\* And, therefore, there is reason to conclude that he would have accounted a well-attested revelation, in which God should declare his will concerning the worship to be rendered to him, an inestimable blessing. That great philosopher Plutarch begins his tract de Isid. et Osirid. with saying that "it becomes all persons who have any understanding to ask all good things of the gods: but that especially we should pray to obtain from them the knowledge of the gods, as far as men are capable of attaining to it; since neither man can receive, nor God bestow, any thing greater and more venerable than truth." Where, allowing for the polytheistical manner of expression, he plainly shows the sense he had both of the importance of the knowledge of divine things, and that this knowledge must come to us from God. Jamblichus, in his life of Pythagoras, speaking of the principles of divine worship, saith "It is manifest that those things are to be done which are pleasing to God: but what they are it is not easy to know, except a man were taught them by God himself, or by some person who had received them from God, or obtained the knowledge of them by some divine means."† Indeed all the latter Platonists and Pythagoreans, Porphyry, Jamblichus, Hierocles, Proclus, &c. though enemies to Christianity, owned the necessity of divine illumination, or a revelation from God, to lead men into the knowledge of divine

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\* I shall here quote a passage from a very ingenious writer, and who is no way inclined to superstition, concerning the necessity of revelation for instructing men how to worship God in a right manner. "Il faut nécessairement que Dieu ait ordonné un culte à l'homme.—Quel chaos affreux ne s'ensuivroit il pas, si chacun avoit une pensée différente sur le culte, qu'on doit à la divinité. L'esprit de l'homme sujet à s'égarer retomberoit bientôt dans les erreurs de l'idolatrie." Lettres Juives, lettre 23.

† Jambl. in Vit. Pythag. cap. 28.

truth, and an acceptable way of worshipping the Deity. But they did not make a right use of this principle. Instead of embracing the revelation which God had really given, and which was confirmed by the most illustrious divine attestations, they sought to be initiated into the mysteries of the gods in several parts of the world, and applied themselves to what they called theurgy, which had in it a mixture of magical ceremonies, and by which they proposed to obtain an intimate intercourse and communication with the gods. But, in a little time, the vanity of their pretensions became manifest to all, and the world heard of them no more.

## CHAP. XXII.

*The fifth and last general reflection. The Christian revelation suited to the necessities of mankind. The glorious change it wrought in the face of things, and in the state of religion in the world; yet accomplished by the seemingly meanest instruments, in opposition to the greatest difficulties. It was given in the fittest season, and attended with the most convincing evidences of a divine original. How thankful should we be for the salutary light it brings, and how careful to improve it! What an advantage it is to have the holy Scriptures in our hands, and the necessity there is of keeping close to the sacred rule there set before us, in order to the preserving the Christian religion in its purity and simplicity.*

THE state of religion in the Pagan world being in that deplorable condition which hath been described, and it having appeared from experience, after a long trial, that human wisdom and reason, if left to itself, was insufficient to recover and reform mankind, it pleased God in his great goodness to grant a revelation from heaven, which was designed to be published to the heathen nations, and confirmed by the most convincing evidences of a divine authority. It was by a revelation from God that religion in its principal fundamental articles was at first communicated to the human race; and when they had almost universally fallen from it, there was need of a new divine revelation, all other methods having been found ineffectual. It is true, that the revelation contained in the writings of Moses and the Prophets, was excellently fitted to set those to whom it was made known right, in what related to the knowledge and adoration of the one living and true God, the great creator and governor of the universe, in opposition to all idolatry and polytheism: and it has been shown that in this respect it was of great advantage not only to the Jews, but to many of the Gentiles among whom they were dispersed, and who thereby had an opportunity given them of being convinced of the impiety and absurdity of the common idolatry. But then it must be considered that the Jewish revelation was immediately promulgated to one particular nation, and fitted in a special manner for their use; and that nation was by many peculiar rites

and usages kept distinct from all others. This, though necessary at that time, and in that state of things, for valuable purposes,\* yet contributed to render them unpopular, and to create a prejudice against them in other nations. To which it may be added, that there were some things of importance for men to know, the full discovery of which was by the divine wisdom reserved for a subsequent revelation, which in its original frame and intention was designed for universal use, and to be published to all nations. And indeed the whole Jewish economy was so contrived as to prepare the way for that more perfect dispensation which was to succeed it. Its rites and ordinances were not only accommodated to the time then present, and to that state of the church, but some of them were originally intended to be presignificative of good things to come, which were to be accomplished in the fittest season. There had been all along a tradition preserved among the people of Israel, derived to them from the earliest ages, concerning a glorious person, whose coming was to be of universal benefit, and in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. This tradition ran through their sacred writings, and was the subject of many express predictions. Not only was it declared, that he was to proceed out of their nation, but the particular tribe, and even the house and family from which he was to spring, the place of his nativity, and the time when he was to make his appearance in the world, were distinctly pointed out. He was also described by many remarkable characters, some of them seemingly inconsistent with each other, which yet in him were all punctually fulfilled. It was clearly and expressly foretold, that

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\* Without those peculiar distinctive rites, the Jews would probably have been confounded with other nations, and involved in the common idolatry to which for a long time they were very prone. But when they were fully established in the worship of the one true God, in opposition to all idolatry, and the appointed time was come for introducing that last and most perfect dispensation of religion, to which the Jewish economy was designed to be preparatory, those distinctive rites, which were as a partition wall between Jews and Gentiles, were to be set aside, that they might all be one in Christ Jesus.

through him the heathen nations should be converted from their idolatry and polytheism, and brought to the acknowledgement and adoration of the one true God; that the Gentiles should receive his law; that in him should they put their trust, and that the idols should be abolished. The predictions concerning him were delivered by different persons, at different times, and in divers manners, through a long succession of ages. Things being thus prepared, at the time which had been marked out by those prophecies, a Divine Person appeared, in whom all these characters were wonderfully united, and which never met together in any other. This yielded a peculiar kind of attestation to him, never equalled in any other case. Besides which, his divine mission was demonstrated by a series of astonishing miracles, which he performed, and enabled his disciples to perform in his name; as also by his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, and by the unparalleled effusion of the Holy Ghost, in his extraordinary gifts and powers, upon his disciples, and those that believed on him, as he himself had promised and foretold. This was the glorious and admirable Person, by whom it pleased God to make the most perfect revelation of his will to mankind. It could not possibly be sent by a more illustrious messenger, or whose divine mission was attested and confirmed by more convincing evidence. And the revelation he brought from heaven was such in every respect as the state of the world required. He exhibited the most pure and perfect rule of moral duty, in all its just extent, which was then much wanted, and which he enforced by the most powerful sanctions, and by a divine authority, at the same time giving the most perfect example of universal holiness and goodness in his own sacred life and practice. He also made the fullest discoveries of the general judgment, and of the important retributions of a future state, the notions of which were greatly obscured and defaced through the corruption of mankind, and the false reasonings of men pretending to wisdom and philosophy. And whereas the whole world was become guilty before God, and obnoxious to his

some special occasions, till the coming of our Saviour, and for some time after.\*

Porphry, whose opposition to Christianity, and attachment to Paganism is well known, goes so far as to pronounce Serapis, the chief of the Egyptian deities, and whom the people worshipped as the highest god, to have been the prince of the evil demons.† That learned philosopher, as was observed before, says that evil demons were very desirous to have divine worship and sacrifices rendered to them: and he not only acknowledges that they were worshipped, but endeavours to justify that practice, as necessary for averting their wrath, and obtaining from them worldly good things. The same Porphyry, as cited by Eusebius, produces an oracle of Apollo prescribing sacrifices to be first offered to an evil demon, to prepare the way for being admitted to an immediate sight of the deity.‡ To destroy this kingdom of Satan erected among the Gentiles, to abolish the worship of their idol deities, and erect the visible kingdom and pure worship of the one living and true God among men, was one glorious design of the gospel of Jesus. In this, as well as in other respects, it was certainly true, that “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John iii. 8. For this end he commissioned his apostles to go “preach the gospel to all nations, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Acts xxvi. 17, 18. A mighty design this, to be executed by such seemingly mean and feeble instruments! But so it was ordered, that “the excellency of the power might appear to be of God, and not of men.” 2 Cor. iv. 7. The usurped empire and dominion of Satan, founded in idolatry and polytheism, seemed to be firmly established in the heathen world. It had stood for many ages, and had long prescription to plead: it had the prejudices of

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\* See a fuller account of this above, chap. vii.

† Apud Euseb. Præp. Evangel. lib. iv. cap. 25.

‡ Ibid. lib. iv. cap. 20.

- the people on its side:\* and was strengthened and upheld by the power and authority of the magistrates, by the arts and subtlety of the politicians, the craft and influence of the idolatrous priests, and the learning and eloquence of the philosophers and wise men of this world. It was interwoven with the civil constitution, and regarded as essential to the prosperity and happiness of the state. It was guarded with all the powers and all the terrors of the world on the one hand, and all its pomps and allurements on the other; and came recommended by every thing which was apt to flatter men's vices and their passions, their ambition and sensuality. And yet no sooner were the first publishers of the gospel sent forth, in the name and by the spirit of a crucified Jesus, but Satan's visible empire received a sensible shock. Never was there a more sudden and glorious change than Christianity wrought soon after its first appearance in the world. Thousands were every where turned from idols to serve the living and true God, delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. The old idolatrous worship, and the long adored deities fell into contempt:

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\* What regard was had to the tradition of their ancestors, and the religion of their country, not only among the vulgar Pagans, but among the philosophers themselves, and how profane and impious a thing it was accounted to call it in question, or so much as to ask a reason for it, appears from a remarkable passage in Plutarch's *Amatorius*. When one of the company, whom he calls Pemptides, desires to be informed on what account love came to be made a deity, another of the dialogists, who bears a principal part in the conversation, and who seems to express Plutarch's own sentiments, gravely says to him, "you seem to me to have attempted to stir things which ought not to be moved with regard to the opinion concerning the gods, when you demand a reason and demonstration for every thing in particular. For the faith of our fathers and of our country is sufficient for us, than which we cannot utter or invent a more evident argument.—For this is a foundation common to all piety; and if once its firmness and established rule be disturbed and shaken in any one instance, it becomes uncertain and suspected in all." Plutarch, *Opera*. tom. II. p. 738. Francof. 1620. This way of thinking and talking was a bar to all attempts for the reformation of the Pagan religion. Every endeavour of this kind was looked upon as a high degree of impiety and profaneness. A manifest proof what difficulties Christianity, at its first promulgation, had to encounter with, both from the learned and the vulgar.



the idol temples soon began to be in a great measure forsaken, and the boasted oracles, whereby the nations had been so long kept under the power of delusion, were struck dumb.\* Instead of the many gods and many lords which were acknowledged and adored among the heathens, they were now brought in great numbers to acknowledge and adore "one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." Instead of the many absurd and impious rites of the Pagan worship, they were instructed to worship God, who is an infinite spirit, in spirit and in truth, in a pure and spiritual manner. Many there were who in every place lifted up to God pure and holy hands, and offered up to him, through the great Mediator of his own appointment, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. The light of the gospel spread far and wide with a wonderful swiftness even in the first age; so that St. Paul represents it as having gone into the whole world, Col. i. 6—23. Rom. x. 18. And this

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\* That the oracles were silenced about or soon after the time of our Saviour's appearing, may be proved from express testimonies, not only of Christian but of heathen authors. Lucan, who wrote his *Pharsalia* in the reign of Nero, scarce thirty years after our Lord's crucifixion, laments it as one of the greatest misfortunes of that age, that the Delphian oracle, which he represents as one of the choicest gifts of the gods, was become silent.

" Non ullo sæcula dono

" Nostra carent majore Deum, quàm Delphica sedes

" Quod sileat."

Pharsal. lib. v. vers. 111.

In like manner Juvenal says,

" Delphis oracula cessant,

" Et genus humanum damnat caligo futuri."

Satyr. vi. vers. 543.

Lucian says, that when he was at Delphi, the oracle gave no answers, nor was the priestess inspired. See his *Phalaris*, Oper. tom. i. p. 745. Amstel. This likewise appears from Plutarch's treatise, *Why the Oracles cease to give Answers*; from whence also it is manifest, that the most learned heathens were very much at a loss how to give a tolerable account of it. Porphyry, in a passage cited from him by Eusebius, says "The city of Rome was overrun with sickness, Æsculapius and the rest of the gods having withdrawn their converse with men: for that since Jesus began to be worshipped, no man had received any public help or benefit from the gods." Apud Euseb. *Præp. Evangel. lib. v. cap. 1. p. 179.*

was what our Saviour himself expressly foretold, at a time when nothing could be more contrary to all human probability, Matt. xxiv. 14. Tacitus speaks of a "huge multitude—" *"multitudo ingens,"* of Christians at Rome, in a passage where he discovers the strongest prejudices against them; and he also gives an account of a great variety of torments and sufferings, to which, through the cruelty of Nero, they were exposed.\* This happened in a little more than thirty years after our Lord's passion. And it appears from Pliny's celebrated epistle to Trajan, written about seventy years after the same great event, how numerous the Christians were in his time. He says, there were many, of all ranks and ages, both men and women, who professed themselves Christians: that the contagion of this superstition had spread not only through the cities, but the towns and country villages: that the temples had been almost left desolate, and the holy rites and ceremonies had been long neglected, and that very few would buy the sacrifices. He shows the strength of his prejudices against Christianity, by calling it a wicked and immoderate superstition; and yet gives a noble testimony to the innocence of their manners; and makes the sum of their fault or error to consist in this, that they were wont to meet on a stated day, before it was light, and to sing hymns to Christ as to a God, and to oblige themselves by an oath not to commit any wickedness, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to keep faith, and to restore any pledge that was entrusted to them. He also bears testimony to their fortitude and constancy, which he calls inflexible obstinacy; and that it was said, none who were true Christians can be compelled to offer wine or frankincense to the gods, or to blaspheme Christ.† Justin Martyr, who lived pretty early in the following age, says, in a passage cited before, that there was no part of mankind, whether Greeks or barbarians, among whom prayers and thanksgivings were not offered to

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\* Tacit. *Annal.* lib. xv.  
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† Plin. *Epist.* lib. x. epist. 97.  
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the Father and Maker of the universe, in the name of: sacrificed Jesus.

This wonderful change in the face of things, and in the state of religion in the heathen world, was brought about by the preaching of the gospel; "God bearing witness" to the first publishers of Christianity "with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will," Heb. ii. 4. These were the visible tokens of a divine interposition, and awakened the attention of mankind to behold and adore the power and majesty of the only true God. They saw all the pretended wonders of their idols infinitely outdone. They saw the first preachers of the gospel, though in themselves weak and contemptible to all outward appearance, and destitute of all worldly advantages, endued with such power from on high, that they not only performed the most extraordinary works, manifestly transcending the power or skill of any man, or of all the men upon earth, but evil spirits were subject to them in the name of Jesus. These facts were not done in a corner, but in the open view of the world, and of enemies strongly prejudiced against them. Satan was, as it were, led in triumph by our Saviour, who gave even his servants power over him. In contemplation of this, our Lord expresseth himself thus, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," Luke x. 18. He had pretended to have his throne in heaven and to arrogate divine honours. But now he was cast down from his assumed divinity, and a visible church or kingdom was erected to God in those nations where Satan had erected a kingdom of darkness before.

Upon the whole, the Christian revelation was made known to the world at a time when it was most wanted; when the darkness and corruption of mankind were arrived at the height, and there were but few traces of the ancient primitive religion remaining among the nations. If it had been published much sooner, and before there had been a full trial made of what was to be expected from human wisdom and philosophy, the great need men stood in of such an ex-

traordinary divine dispensation would not have been so apparent. It might have been said, that it was introduced in illiterate and uncultivated ages, which was a suspicious circumstance. Besides, it would have been deprived of the great advantage arising from the preparatory Jewish economy, and from a series of illustrious prophecies continued for many ages, all pointing to that wonderful person who was appointed by the divine wisdom and goodness to be the great Teacher and Saviour of mankind. To which it may be added, that the Christian revelation made its first appearance at a time when the Roman empire had brought the greatest part of the known world under its dominion. It was first published among the nations belonging to that empire, which was then the most knowing and civilized part of the earth, and from whence it might most conveniently be propagated to other nations. Accompanied with the most illustrious and convincing proofs and evidences of a divine power, presence, and glory, and carrying it in remarkable internal characters of truth, goodness, and purity, it soon made a surprising progress, notwithstanding the seemingly unsurmountable obstacles it had to encounter with,\* till at length the whole system of Paganism, which seemed so strongly established, and which had prevailed for so many ages, fell before it. This religion had extended very far, and if Christians had been duly careful both to preserve it in its purity, and to propagate and recommend it by their instructions and example, to which they are bound by the strongest obligations, it would probably before now have been universally known and diffused. What farther extraordinary means it may please God, in his great wisdom and goodness, to make use of for diffusing and establishing true religion in the world, we cannot tell. But something of this kind we are taught to expect by several passages of Scripture, which seem plainly to refer to a

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\* The difficulties and obstacles Christianity had to struggle with are represented, in an elegant and striking manner, by Mr. West, in his excellent "Observations on the History and Resurrection of Jesus Christ."

future general conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith, and to the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles.\* And whenever this shall happen, it will disclose a surprizing scene, which will fill us with a pleasing astonishment, and tend mightily to illustrate the glory of Divine Providence.

In the mean time let us be thankful to God for the advantages we enjoy by the gospel for religious and moral improvement. "How great and admirable," saith Eusebius, "should the gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ appear to us, which instructs the whole race of mankind to worship, with becoming thoughts and devotion, the God and Lord of the sun and moon, the Creator of the whole world, and who is himself above and beyond the universe: to praise and celebrate not the elements of bodies, but the Dispenser of life, of food, and of all good things: and in no wise to worship the visible parts of the world, or any thing that is perceivable by the fleshly sense, since every such thing is of a corruptible nature; but to adore that mind alone, which being in itself invisible, is present in all these things, and is the Architect both of the whole universe and every part of it, and which, showing forth the wonderful virtue and greatness of its divinity, in all things both in heaven and in earth, governeth the whole world in a manner not to be perceived by our senses, and by reasons of wisdom which no language can express."†

In order to our making a right use of the advantages we enjoy by the gospel revelation, let us set a high value on the Holy Scriptures, and adhere to them as the great rule of our faith and practice. They are acknowledged by all Christians

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\* The ingenious author of the *Lettres Juives*, speaking in the person of a Jew, acknowledges the piety and zeal of the first Nazarenes, who shed their blood to draw mankind from idolatry; and that if the unity of God is known throughout the whole world, it is to them that it is principally owing. "Il faut avouer que c'étoient de grands hommes qui verserent leur sang pour retirer les hommes de idolatrie: et si l'unité de Dieu est connu dans l'univers entier, c'est à eux à qui on est singulierement redevable."

† Euseb. *Præpar. Evangel.* lib. iii. cap. 6. p. 96, 97. Paris, 1628.

to be of divine authority. They contain the original records of our holy religion, and of the revelation that was brought from heaven, as delivered in its primitive purity and simplicity by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles. If we would form a just idea of Christianity, free from all the additions and corruptions which were afterwards brought into it, we must carefully consult those divine oracles. Happy would it have been for the Christian church, if they had all along kept close to that sacred rule. They would not then have fallen into those gross corruptions in doctrine, worship, and practice, which have created prejudices in the minds of many against Christianity, and from which infidels have taken occasion to form their most plausible objections: though in reality these things cannot be justly charged upon the religion of Jesus, as delivered in the holy Scriptures. It is however the mighty advantage of a written revelation, that by an impartial consulting it, the deviations from it may be detected, and things may be again reduced to the original standard. By means of the Scriptures, even the vulgar themselves may be sufficiently instructed in the most important articles of religion, and may be provided with a proper remedy, both against the impositions of designing men, and against idolatry in all its forms, though covered over with the most specious pretences. Eusebius justly reckons it amongst the advantages for which we ought to have a high esteem for the gospel revelation, that thereby books and doctrines, which contain rules of consummate virtue, and tend to form the manners to true piety, are delivered to men, women, and children, and are publicly read and explained for the use of all.\*

If we have now the knowledge of the only true God, if not only men of great learning and deep speculation, but thousands of the people in Christian nations, have a juster notion of God, of his providence, and of the worship that is due to him, in opposition to all idolatry and polytheism, than even

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\* *Præper. Evangel. lib. v. cap. I. p. 181.*

the wise men and philosophers among the Pagans, to what can this so properly be ascribed, as to the light of divine revelation which shineth among us? How thankful, therefore, should we be to God, and how desirous to show forth his praises and virtues, who hath, in his grace and mercy, called us out of darkness into his marvellous light! Surely we should regard the having the holy Scriptures in our hands as the greatest and most valuable of all our privileges. And it highly concerneth us to endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by walking in a holy exemplary conversation, becoming the gospel of Christ. And the obligations we are under to do this will farther appear, if it be considered, that we are thereby not only instructed in the right knowledge and worship of the only true God, in opposition to all idolatry and polytheism, but we have also a perfect rule of moral duty set before us in all its just extent, and enforced by a divine authority, and by the most powerful and engaging motives; and that we have also the fullest discoveries there made to us of a future state of retributions, and the great important realities of an unseen eternal world. And that, in both these respects, the nations stood in great need of an extraordinary divine revelation, especially about the time of our Saviour's appearing, is what I propose to show in the remaining part of this work.

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*Pardoning mercy*—discovered to our first parents immediately after the fall, and the notion of it still continued, and was never entirely lost among mankind, 46.

- Pausanias*—his judicious observation, that events which really happen were rendered incredible by the fictions that were superadded to them, 90.
- Persians*—according to Dr. Hyde's account, were adorers of the one true God from the most ancient times, having learned their religion from Shem and Elam, 59.—They had among them, from times immemorial, the history of the creation of the world, 64.—fell early into the worship of the heavenly bodies, yet still retained the knowledge and worship of the one supreme God, 79. Their religion said by the oriental writers to have been reformed by Abraham, and afterwards by Zoroaster, 136. N. See *Zoroaster*.
- Peru*, the most ancient inhabitants of—acknowledged one supreme God; but seldom erected temples or offered sacrifices to him, 75. The modern Peruvians paid their chief devotions to the sun, 84.
- Phenicians*—the first physical or natural philosophers among them looked upon the sun, moon, stars, and elements to be the only gods, 76.
- Philosophers, Pagan*—did not derive their religious and moral principles solely and entirely from the disquisitions of their own reason, nor did the best of them assume this to themselves; but ascribed a great deal to ancient tradition, which was supposed to be of divine original, 10, 54. They bestowed high encomiums on philosophy, as the gift of the gods, and defined it to be the knowledge of things divine and human, 197, 198. Notwithstanding their glorious pretences, they were not well fitted to lead the people into right notions in matters of religion, or to reclaim them from their superstitions and idolatries: this is shown from several considerations, 199, et seq. They had little influence for want of a proper authority to enforce their instructions, 202, 203. The most eminent of them involved their sentiments, especially in religious matters, in great obscurity, and carefully concealed them from the people, 204, et seq. Some of them denied all certainty and evidence, and endeavoured to subvert the main principles of all religion, 209, 210. The most celebrated among them were under great darkness and uncertainty in matters of the highest consequence, 211, et seq. The philosophers were the great corrupters of the ancient tradition concerning the one true God, and the creation of the world, 217. The strange confusion and diversity of sentiments among them with regard to the Deity, shown from Cicero's book de Natura Deorum, 215, 216. The ancient philosophers divided into two main ranks. Some of them excluded a divine mind and intelligence from the formation of the universe, 217, 218. Others ascribed it to a most wise and powerful mind, 222—yet these were defective in what relates to the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and encouraged polytheism, *ibid.* et seq. Few, if any of them, acknowledged God to be in a proper sense the Creator of the world, 239, et seq. They held the eternity of matter, *ibid.* et 241—and after Aristotle, they generally held the eternity of the world both as to matter and form, 244, 245. The latter Platonists and Pythagoreans taught that the world proceeded eternally from God in a way of emanation, which naturally led to the Spinozan scheme, 243, 244. Many of the philosophers taught that God is the soul of the world, or that the whole animated system of the world is God, 246, et seq. This was the doctrine of the ancient Egyptians, 247—cf Varro, 248—of the Brahmins, *ibid.*—and especially of the Stoics, 249, et seq. The pernicious consequences of this notion shown, 253, et seq. It was used to justify the heathen polytheism in worshipping the several things of nature, and parts of the world, as gods or parts of God, *ibid.* The Pagan philosophy was so managed as to lay a foundation for their polytheism and idolatry, 254, 255. The greatest and best of the heathen philosophers, in their most serious discourses spoke of a plurality of gods, whom they recommended to the adoration of the people, 258, et seq. When they set themselves to prove the being of a God, and a Providence, they proceeded on the supposition of a plurality of gods, 260, et seq. They referred the people for instruction in religious matters to the priests and to the oracles, 275. It was a general maxim among them, that every man ought to conform to the religion of his country, 280. When they took upon them the character of legislators, polytheism, and not the worship of the one true God, was the religion they endeavoured to establish, 281, et seq. They employed their learning and abilities to defend the worship of a plurality of deities; and pretended this was an honour to

the Supreme, 288, 289. Instead of diminishing the number of deities, they added a multitude of fantastic and metaphysical deities to the popular ones, 290. N. They justified the worshipping of images, 290, and undertook to colour over the absurdest part of the Pagan theology, by allegorizing the most indecent fables, 291, 292. They apologized even for the Egyptian animal worship, which many of the other Pagans ridiculed, 292, 293. Some of the most refined philosophers were against all external worship of the supreme God, 294, 295. Their notions of Providence considered. See *Providence*. They made new efforts, after Christianity appeared, to support the credit of declining Paganism, 371. For this purpose they made alterations in their philosophy, and borrowed several things from the holy Scriptures, but still endeavoured to uphold the heathen polytheism, 372, 375. The best of the philosophers acknowledged their own darkness, and were sensible of the need they stood in of a divine revelation and instruction, 373, et seq. Some of them pretended to extraordinary communications with the gods, but they and their pretences fell into contempt, 376. See also, 203.

*Physiology, Pagan*—a source of polytheism, 113. The things of nature, and parts of the universe, were turned into allegorical persons, and regarded as so many distinct divinities, *ibid*.

*Plato*—observes, that man, without education and culture, would be the wildest of all animals, 7. A remarkable passage from him concerning the state of men after the flood, 50. He travelled into Egypt and the Eastern countries for his improvement, and from thence seems to have borrowed some of his sublimest notions, 54. He frequently talks of ancient and venerable traditions supposed to be of divine original, *ibid*.—charges the opinion of the stars being inanimate bodies as leading to atheism, 80. He frequently prescribes the worship of the stars, which seem to be the divinities he principally recommends to the people, *ibid*. See also 281. Finds fault with the fables of Homer and Hesiod concerning the gods, 126—yet dares not entirely reject the fables of the poets and mythologists, 128, 129—represents the poets as divinely inspired, and that it is God that speaks by them, 129—allows drunkenness at the feasts of Bacchus, but not at other times, 148. There is great obscurity in many of his doctrines and notions; and, by his own account, few are able to penetrate into his real sentiments, 206, et seq. He believed one supreme God, but did not think it safe or proper to publish him to the vulgar, 207. See also 233. He frequently acknowledges the darkness of the human mind in divine things, 212. He held two principles of things, God and matter, 239. In disputing against the atheists, he asserts the existence and providence of the gods, 260. In his books of Laws he does not recommend the worship of the one true God to the people, but of a plurality of deities, 281, et seq. He had a high opinion of the oracles as the best and only guides in matters of religion and divine worship, 279. N. The first and highest God, according to him, was not concerned in the creation, nor is so in the government of the world, 287. N. The account he gives of the supreme Unity different from the idea given us of God in the holy Scriptures, 294. N. A passage of his examined, in which he represents it as the practice of every good and prudent man to invoke God in every undertaking, 300, 301.

*Pliny the Elder*—held the world to be God, immense, eternal, neither generated, nor to be destroyed, 81—disapproved the turning human qualities and accidents, virtues and vices, into deities, 116. He observes that mortals crumbled the deity into parts, and worshipped that in God which they themselves stood most in need of, 118. A remarkable passage from him concerning fortune as a deity universally invoked, 302. He thinks it ridiculous to suppose that the supreme God takes any care of human affairs; and affirms that this would undoubtedly be a pollution to him, 306.

*Pliny the Younger*—his testimony to the virtue and constancy of the primitive Christians, 385.

*Plotinus*—and the latter Platonists and Pythagoreans, after Christianity appeared, continued to plead for the divinity and worship of the sun and stars, 82. He taught that the world is a god, and that the sun and other stars are gods, as being animated by a divine soul, 255—and pretended that the worshipping

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- Pluche, Abbé de*—his account of the original of the Pagan deities and mythology grounded on sufficient evidence, 90. N.
- Plutarch*—his sentiments of the necessity of education and instruction, 7—gives it as the universal opinion of the Pagans in his time, that the stars are gods; and affirms that all men worshipped them as such, 80—passes a severe censure on Euhemerus, and those who asserted that the gods vulgarly worshipped had once been men: which yet cannot reasonably be denied, 92, 93, 170, 171—blames those who gave the name of gods to pictures and images, and to things insensible and inanimate, which the gods have provided for the use of mankind, 112, 113, 114—acknowledges that many of the rites in use among the Pagans were designed to placate and gratify evil demons, 119, 381. His book of Isis and Osiris designed as an apology for the Pagan polytheism, 174, 336. He held two eternal principles, the one good, and the other evil; and affirms, that this was the doctrine of the ancients, and taught by the most celebrated philosophers, 238, 239. He asserts the eternity of matter, 240—puts the doctrine of providence on the same footing with that of the stars being animated, 311—seems to hold with Euripides, that God concerns himself with great matters, and leaves the smaller to fortune, 313. A passage from him concerning the universal consent of nations in acknowledging and worshipping one God under different names considered, 335, et seq. The strange and unjust representations he makes of the Jews, and their rites, 374, 375. N.—charges it as an impious attempt to make the least alteration in the religion and worship derived from their ancestors, and established by the laws, 383. N.
- Poets, Heathen*—kept up the ancient tradition of one supreme God; but corrupted it by confounding him with their Jupiter, the chief of their idol-deities, of whom they made such indecent representations, 69, et seq. They were the prophets and chief instructors of the people, 99, 127, 128—looked upon even by Socrates and Plato as divinely inspired, 129—blamed by Dr. Cudworth for personating and deifying the inanimate parts of the world and things of nature, which produced a vast number of gods and goddesses, 130. N. But this is also justly chargeable on the philosophers, *ibid.* See also 254, 255. Both the poets and the philosophers made the Pagan theology look too aristocratically, 273, 274.
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- Polytheism, Pagan*—The most plausible apology for it is, that the multitude of their deities was only the worship of the one true God under different names and manifestations. This pretence examined, and shown to be insufficient, 107, et seq. Dr. Cudworth calls this the recondite theology of the Pagans; and says, that probably the vulgar did not understand it, 110. Polytheism was the established religion and worship of all the Pagan nations, 135. Remarkable difference between them and the Jews in this respect, 136 et 171. N. See *Idolatry*.
- Porphyry*—his account of evil demons, 120—justifies the worship of them, *ibid.*—says that Serapis, the great Egyptian deity, was the prince of evil demons, 121—gives a high encomium of the Egyptian priests, and attributes their worshipping animals to their extraordinary wisdom and divine knowledge, 293—seems to be against rendering any external worship to the highest God of all, 295—complains, that from the time that Jesus began to be worshipped, the gods had withdrawn their converse from men, 384. N.
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*Religion, natural*—2, et seq. See *Natural*.

*Religion, revealed*—that which was originally communicated to man by revelation from God, 11, et seq.

*Revelation*—not an immediate infallible inspiration of every particular person of the human race, which is contrary to evident fact and experience; but it is to be understood of God's making an extraordinary discovery of himself or of his will, to some particular person or persons, to be by them communicated to others in his name, 13, 14. The possibility of such a revelation shown, 13, 14, et seq. God can give those to whom the revelation is originally and immediately made, a full and certain assurance of its being a divine revelation, 14, 15. He can also commissionate them to communicate it to others, and can furnish them with sufficient credentials of their divine mission, to show that what they deliver in his name is a true revelation from God, 15, 16, et seq. This may be transmitted to those who live in succeeding ages, with such evidence as to lay them under an obligation to receive and submit to it as of divine authority, 18, 19. The usefulness and advantage of divine revelation, and the great need there is of it in the present state of mankind, shown from several considerations, 21, 22, et seq. It has been the general sense of mankind in all ages and nations, that God hath made revelations of his will, 28, 29. This notion has been often abused by enthusiasts and impostors; but this is no just argument against the possibility or expediency of divine revelation, 29. A true revelation from God, if duly attended to, is the best security against the mischiefs arising from falsely pretended ones, 30, 31. Since revelation is both possible and useful, it is not probable that God left all men at all times without such a valuable help, 31. A brief scheme of the order and design of the principal revelations which God hath given to mankind, 31, 32, 33. They give mutual life and support to one another, 32. Nothing less than an extraordinary revelation was sufficient, as things were circumstanced, to recover the Pagan nations from their idolatry and polytheism, to the right knowledge and worship of the one true God, 368, et seq.

*Revelation, Christian*. See *Christian*.

*Rites*—cruel and impure, of the Heathen worship, 143, et seq.

*Romans, ancient, public religion of*—highly commended by Dionysius Halicarnasæus and Cicero, 134, 135—prescribed the worship of many gods, 135. It was made up partly of the physical and partly of the poetical theology, 138. Scenical games and plays, in which the vicious actions of their gods were represented, were taken into their public religion, 139, 140. It grew more corrupt in the latter times of their state, when learning and philosophy had made a progress among them, than it had been in the rude and more illiterate ages, 365, 366.

## S

*Sacrifice*—a rite of religion of the greatest antiquity, and originally of divine appointment, 63.

*Sacrifices, human*—anciently of general extent among the Pagans, and continued long even among the most civilized nations, 143, et seq.

*Scripture, Holy*—The representation there made of the corrupt and miserable state of the Heathen world exactly just and agreeable to fact, 322, et seq. The Scripture is the great rule of faith and practice, and contains the original records of our holy religion, 388, 389. A steady adherence to it is the best

means for preserving the Christian religion in its purity, and for reforming it when corrupted, *ibid.* The light it affords calls for our highest thankfulness, 389, 390.

*Seneca*—his account of Jupiter Capitolinus considered, 100, 101—pretends, that all the different Heathen deities were one God with different names and powers, 107. In his treatise of Superstition, he passes a severe censure on the civil theology and public religion of the Romans; yet says, it was what a wise man ought to conform to in obedience to the laws, 142—asserts, that the world is God, and that we are all of us parts and members of the Divinity, 244—supposes matter to be an obstruction to the Deity in his operations, so that he could not make things so well as he would, 242. He seems to think, that Providence seldom concerns itself about individuals, 314. He discovers a strong prejudice against the Jews; but owns, that there were many who imitated their religion and rites, 353.

*Seventh day*—was for a long time distinguished among the nations, 63. A particular regard was had to the number seven as sacred, *ibid.* The numbering by weeks, consisting of seven days, was in use from the remotest antiquity, especially among the Eastern nations, and was probably derived originally from the history of the creation, 64.

*Shaftesbury, Earl of*—observes, that man is born not only to virtue, but to religion and piety, 38.

*Socrates*—declined being initiated in the mysteries, 165—averse to disquisitions into the physical nature and causes of things, 206, 207—seems to have believed one Supreme God, yet almost always speaks of the gods in the plural; to whom he ascribes the formation of things, and the blessings of Providence, and to whom divine worship is to be paid, 229, 230, et seq. et 259. He referred the people to the oracles in matters of religion, and recommended divination, 276—was for every man's worshipping the gods according to the laws of his country, *ibid.* It is a mistake, that he endeavoured to draw the people off from the public religion, and the established polytheism, 277.

*Sophocles*—A remarkable passage from him concerning the one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and against the Heathen worship of images, 331. N.

*Soul, human*—held by many of the philosophers, especially the Pythagoreans and Stoics, to be a dispersed part of the divine Essence, 225, 251.

*Stilpo, the philosopher*—censured by the Areopagus, and ordered to depart the city of Athens, for saying that the statue of Minerva, made by Phidias, was not a god, 113.

*Stoics*—retained the fables of the poetical mythology, but gave physical and allegorical interpretations of them, 130. Many of their explications forced and unnatural, *ibid.* 131. They held that the world is God, and that particular souls are part of the universal soul of the world, and visible corporeal things parts of his body, 249, 251. They filled the earth, air, and sea with gods; and the unity of God which they professed really included a multiplicity of deities, 254, 255. They were strenuous asserters of Divine Providence; but for the most part supposed it not to extend to individuals, except to some persons of eminence and affairs of importance, 312, 313.

*Strabo*—his account of the impurities of the Heathen religion, 148, 149, 150, 160.

*Sun*—worshipped by the Zabians as the chief God, 78—called by the Phenicians the only Lord of heaven, 78. Peculiar titles and attributes of the one true God ascribed to it, 82—according to Macrobius, was the one universal Deity adored under several names and characters, *ibid.*—regarded by many of the Egyptians as the Demiurgus or Maker of the world, 181, 220.

*Sykes, Dr.*—asserts, that the doctrine of the unity and perfections of God was the universal doctrine of the Pagans, and that it was derived to them, not from revelation or tradition, but from the mere unassisted light of nature and reason, 235. The proofs he brings for this shown to be insufficient, *ibid.* et 267, 268. N. He says, the Greek philosophers travelled into Egypt to get at the knowledge of the unity, 236. And though he represents it as acknowledged by the Heathens in general, yet it appears from his own account, that this doctrine was known to few, 339. He will not allow, that the Greeks learned any thing



in religion from the Jews or their Scriptures, though he owns they did from other Eastern nations, 347, 348. N. He grants, that, as things were circumstanced, a divine revelation was necessary to recover the Heathens from their idolatries and corruptions in religion, 371. N.  
*Symbols*—different of the Deity, turned into gods, and worshipped as such, 112.

## T

*Tacitus*—looks upon it as uncertain, whether all things are governed by fate and immutable necessity, or by chance; and says, many were persuaded that the gods take no care at all of men, or any of the events relating to them, 306. His false and contradictory accounts of the Jews, 354, 355. N. His testimony concerning the multitude of Christians at Rome in the reign of Nero, and the cruel torments to which they were exposed, 385.

*Tertullian*—appeals to the consciences of the Pagans themselves, and to their most authentic monuments, that all their gods had once been men, 108. N.—represents the Romans as more corrupt in religion in the latter times of their state, than their ancestors had been, 365.

*Thales*—his notion of God and the origin of things considered, 223, et seq.

*Theogony, Pagan.* See *Cosmogony*.

*Theology, Pagan*—distributed by Varro and others into three different kinds; the poetical or fabulous, the physical or philosophical, and the civil or popular, 125.

*Theology, poetical.* See *Poetical*.

*Theology, physical or philosophical*, 197—in the opinion of Scævola and Varro not very proper for the people or the state, 200. It was had in no great esteem by the magistrates or politicians, *ibid*, et 201.

*Theology, civil*—as established by the Roman laws, is said by Scævola and Varro to have been the theology of the vulgar, but not the true, 105. The civil theology, according to Varro's account of it, was that which was taught and administered by the priests, and appointed by the state, 134. It is observed by Dr. Cudworth, that there was a mixture of the mythical or fabulous theology together with the natural, almost every where to make up the civil theology of the Pagans, 137. The close connection between the Roman civil theology and the poetical shown, *ibid*, et seq.

*Tindal, Dr.*—his main principle, that the religion and law of nature is naturally and necessarily known to all men even without instruction, contrary to fact and experience, 5, 6.

*Tradition*—peculiar advantages for transmitting the knowledge of religion by tradition in the earliest ages, 47, 48. Tradition of religion, laws, and sciences, originally derived from the Eastern parts, where mankind were first settled after the flood, 51. The wisdom of the East consisted much in teaching and delivering the ancient traditions; and this was the original way of philosophizing among the Greeks themselves, 131, 51. There were traditions from the first ages, and which spread generally among the nations, concerning the creation of the world out of a chaos, and the dissolution of it by fire, 52. Traditionary stories of the ancient patriarchs and Jewish heroes mixed with the Pagan mythology, 89. The most eminent Greek philosophers got much of their knowledge by tradition, 237.

## V U

*Varro*, the most learned of the Romans—endeavours to give physical and allegorical explications of Jupiter, Juno, and the other Pagan deities, 103. See also 184. He passes a severe censure on the poetical or fabulous, 126—says the people were inclined to follow the poets rather than the philosophers, in what related to the gods, 128—gives a strange account of the impurities and obscenities used at the festivals of Bacchus in some parts of Italy, 151. N. He thought the public religion wanted to be reformed, yet was for upholding it by the civil authority, and retaining the names and history of the gods, as delivered by their

ancestors, 156. The philosophical theology was, in his opinion, only fit for disputations in the schools, but not proper to be taught openly among the people, 200. He held that God is the soul of the world, and that the world itself is God, 248—and he calls the soul of the world and its parts the true gods, 254. He speaks with respect of the Jews as worshipping God in a right manner, and that they worshipped the highest God, which he calls Jupiter, without images, 350. He observes, that the ancient Romans for 170 years had no images in their temples, and thinks religion would do better without them, 363.

*Unity of God*—the philosophers were more explicit in their acknowledgments of the unity, and some other important articles of religion, after the appearance of Christianity, than they had been before, 108, 334. No sufficient proof that the doctrine of the unity was taught in the mysteries, 173. See also 338. The Greek philosophers are said to have travelled into Egypt to get at the knowledge of the unity, 236. The pretence that this was the universal doctrine of the Pagan world, and that all nations worshipped the one true God under different names and titles, examined, 333, 334, et seq.

*Voltaire, Mons. de*—represents the Pagan religion as consisting only of morality and festivals, or times of rejoicing, 153—praises those of the learned sect in China for leaving the gross superstitions to the people, and feeding the magistrates with a purer substance, 221. N. And yet those they called the learned Chinese are generally atheists, *ibid.* See *Chinese*.

## W

*World*—The Egyptians and most of the learned Heathens held the whole animated system of the world to be God, 247, et seq. 340. The Pagans in general were in one sense or other world-worshippers, 255, 256.

*Worship*—the proper manner of worshipping God best known in Divine Revelation, 22, 23. See also 375. Some nations that seemed to acknowledge one supreme God rendered him no worship at all, 71, 72. The worship of the one true God, and of him only, a fundamental principle of the Jewish constitution, 136, 344. Some of the most refined philosophers were against any external worship of the highest God, 294, 295.

## X

*Xenophon*—Plato blamed by him for quitting the simple philosophy of Socrates, and embracing the portentous wisdom of Pythagoras and the Egyptians, 206.

## Z

*Zabians*—held the stars to be deities, but the sun to be the chief God, 78—worshipped evil beings, but especially Sammael, the principal of the evil demons, 121. They asserted the eternity of the world, 244.

*Zaleucus*, the Locrian lawgiver—a remarkable passage from the preface to his laws, 67, 258.

*Zeus*—among the Greeks, was at first, according to Dr. Cudworth, the name of a hero, and afterwards applied to the supreme God, 99. See *Jupiter*.

*Zoroaster*—supposed by many to have lived in the most ancient patriarchal times, and therefore might have been acquainted with the primitive religion derived from Adam and Noah, 60. N. According to Dr. Hyde and the Oriental writers, he lived in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, was a disciple of one of the Jewish prophets, and incorporated many of the Mosaical rites into his own religion, *ibid.* et 136. N.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.















